Randomly Around Kashmir

Dr. R. L. Bhat

[illegible] पुस्तकालय
[illegible]
400

40

Randomly Around Kashmir

Dr. R. L. Bhat

Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra
for
Sharda Library

शारदा पुस्तकालय
(संजीवनी शा. के. जमशेदपुर)
क्रमांक ४००

Randomly
Around Kashmir

Dr. R. L. Bhat

Randomly Around Kashmir

Dr. R.L. Bhat
(Profession)

© The Author

Rs. 100

First Published 2006

Published by Dr. R.L. Bhat Publications. H.No. Bohri, Jammu,

Editor's Note

Dr. R.L. Bhat, the author of this book - 'Randomly Around India' has written copiously on varied subjects for the last one decade and a half. His weekly column titled 'Yours Randomly' has appeared in a leading newspaper of the state without any break for the last nine years. His friends repeatedly requested him to compile these articles in a book which could prove highly beneficial and valuable given the broad sweep and range of these articles.

As we know that from the point of view of practicality it is difficult to store newspapers containing articles of our interest, the compilation of an anthology is the next best thing that can be done in this regard. Though we may loose romance and sense of history that a newspaper may present, but to make a book out of them is perhaps the best possible way of handling them over to posterity.

When repeatedly goaded over a long period of time that these articles need to be published in a book, Dr. R.L. Bhat finally gave in to the opinion of his friends and wellwishers. One morning he came over and handled me a fat file containing these articles. He asked me to select the best pieces out of the file so that an anthology could be made out of them. I felt flattered. A person of his capacity and acumen entrusting me a job of editing and compilation was an honour.

This honour became a challenge. I resolved to do the job to the best of my ability, though in the heart of hearts I was feeling nervous, fully aware of my limited experience. These articles has a very broad range in literary value and relevance. They were on wide and varied subjects like history and politics of Kashmir, the tragedy of displacement of Hindus from the valley, Indian state and its political dilemma, clash of civilization, international affairs, Indianness, Gandhi, Secularism and such prosaic things like a power cut or apathy of a Government Department to replace a burnt out Transformer etc.

These writings in fact reflect the intense power of observation of the author and an equally intense desire to reform and replace the corrupt, archaic and unjust social system, making it a difficult job to select better articles or should I say more relevant ones. Summing up courage I started selecting articles which reflected the views and ideas that the author wanted to convey. The job of an editor or compiler is challenging from an ethical point of view. The editor has to be judicious to the utmost possible in selection. His personal likes and dislikes have to take back stage and he has to embrace the persona and ideas of the author till he finishes his job.

The anthology titled 'Randomly Around India' is comprised of a series of articles written over a long period of time. They depict socio-political and cultural reality of our country. They also force us to come out of the slumber of insensitivity and appraise us of the pressures that are being employed to suppress and dilute the salient features of Indian civilization from within and without. The anthology has been divided into major headings like life, social, ethical, political, democracy, persons and India.

As in poetry the modern blank verse has now taken centre stage, so in prose a new form of writing has come up. This modern prose has not followed only the 'progressive' idiom but it has become open ended free from embellishments. Rather it is a direct style of writing or expression. These articles are in fact short essays. The anthology is thus a collection of essays. Hence it qualifies as a form of creative literature but with a flavour of modern reporting. The contents and chapters of 'Randomly Around India' have been named and listed in the same scheme. They are unburdened from the usual classification methodology or say regimented rhyme. Attempt has been made that they are hitricately linked to each other in such a way that when the reader finishes the book, he will feel as if he has coursed a thought provoking, intellectual journey. The reader shall feel a surge of an inner urge to rise and act, and to do something to stem the rot in human life.

As the main purpose of the author is to create an urgent awareness to build a just, modern society free from such things among others as political exploitation and unrealistic appeasement, it is hoped towards that aim. The ultimate judge of any creative work is the reader himself. The anthology 'Randomly around India' is before him, he will, finally convey its limitations or relish its merit.

Before concluding I must frankly admit that there may be shortcomings in the editing of this book. I shall be grateful to receive suggestions to improve the book further.

July 2005.

Pradeep Koul

CONTENTS

HISTORICAL

☞ Only stones? Sure mullaji... Confident?..... 1
☞ Heads or Tails they win them both..... 4
☞ Is understanding a dirty word?..... 8
☞ Two Nations by a different name..... 11
☞ History as a perspective..... 14
☞ All clevers on one side..... 17
☞ Belly dancers and skull dredgers, all!..... 20
☞ Fiddle Neros Fiddle, India burns well..... 23
☞ Flawed theories faulty prescriptions..... 26
☞ Communist contortions of nationalism..... 30
☞ Willing Executioners of History..... 34

TERRORISM

☞ It's the Kargil rebound..... 39
☞ Uncertain uncertainties galore..... 43
☞ Neatly scripted killings, NaY?..... 47
☞ A full...too full a year..... 51
☞ Terrorism is unacceptable..... 54
☞ Extra-national loyalties..... 57
☞ They kill for their sport..... 60
☞ US, USA, ISRAEL and Terrorists..... 63
☞ Poto and USA Patriot act..... 66

PANDITS

☞ The Cabinet bit in the KP mouth..... 70
☞ Maneauvering the Pandits nigh..... 73

is challenging from an ethical point of view. The editor has to be judicious to the utmost possible in selection. His personal likes and dislikes have to take back stage and he has to embrace the persona and ideas of the author till he finishes his job.

The anthology titled 'Randomly Around India' is comprised of a series of articles written over a long period of time. They depict socio-political and cultural reality of our country. They also force us to come out of the slumber of insensitivity and appraise us of the pressures that are being employed to suppress and dilute the salient features of Indian civilization from within and without. The anthology has been divided into major headings like life, social, ethical, political, democracy, persons and India.

As in poetry the modern blank verse has now taken centre stage, so in prose a new form of writing has come up. This modern prose has not followed only the 'progressive' idiom but it has become open ended free from embellishments. Rather it is a direct style of writing or expression. These articles are in fact short essays. The anthology is thus a collection of essays. Hence it qualifies as a form of creative literature but with a flavour of modern reporting. The contents and chapters of 'Randomly Around India' have been named and listed in the same scheme. They are unburdened from the usual classification methodology or say regimented rhyme. Attempt has been made that they are hitricately linked to each other in such a way that when the reader finishes the book, he will feel as if he has coursed a thought provoking, intellectual journey. The reader shall feel a surge of an inner urge to rise and act, and to do something to stem the rot in human life.

As the main purpose of the author is to create an urgent awareness to build a just, modern society free from such things among others as political exploitation and unrealistic appeasement, it is hoped towards that aim. The ultimate judge of any creative work is the reader himself. The anthology 'Randomly around India' is before him, he will, finally convey its limitations or relish its merit.

Before concluding I must frankly admit that there may be shortcomings in the editing of this book. I shall be grateful to receive suggestions to improve the book further.

July 2005.

Pradeep Koul

CONTENTS

HISTORICAL

☞ Only stones? Sure mullaji... Confident?..... 1
☞ Heads or Tails they win them both..... 4
☞ Is understanding a dirty word?..... 8
☞ Two Nations by a different name..... 11
☞ History as a perspective..... 14
☞ All clevers on one side..... 17
☞ Belly dancers and skull dredgers, all!..... 20
☞ Fiddle Neros Fiddle, India burns well..... 23
☞ Flawed theories faulty prescriptions..... 26
☞ Communist contortions of nationalism..... 30
☞ Willing Executioners of History..... 34

TERRORISM

☞ It's the Kargil rebound..... 39
☞ Uncertain uncertainties galore..... 43
☞ Neatly scripted killings, NaY?..... 47
☞ A full...too full a year.... 51
☞ Terrorism is unacceptable..... 54
☞ Extra-national loyalties..... 57
☞ They kill for their sport..... 60
☞ US, USA, ISRAEL and Terrorists..... 63
☞ Poto and USA Patriot act..... 66

PANDITS

☞ The Cabinet bit in the KP mouth..... 70
☞ Maneauvering the Pandits nigh..... 73

☞ KP's A hierarchy of issue..... 77
☞ KP's *chalo bhulava aya hai*..... 81
☞ *Dawat-i-Irshad* from Syed Slah?..... 87
☞ K.P Return : Is goodwill enough..... 89

KASHMIR

☞ Confront the Two.Nation theory in Kashmir..... 93
☞ Towards a lasting solution in Kashmir..... 97
☞ And, now a Hurriat ceasefire!..... 101
☞ Division is half the solution..... 104
☞ Talking to hollows in the wood..... 107
☞ Accession, Autonomy and Kashmir..... 110
☞ But why should J&K be special?..... 115
☞ Will autonomy solve anything?..... 119
☞ Can Article 370 be abrogated..... 122
☞ No rest for Kashmir psyche..... 127
☞ Re-organization – call the cat by its colour..... 130
☞ Narrowly liberal half way secular..... 134
☞ *Yaar wafadar ik nazar idhar bhi*..... *138*

PAKISTAN

☞ Yes — why?..... 142
☞ Enter the full President!..... 144
☞ The base line remains unchanged..... 148
☞ The dimwits loose another non-battle!..... 152
☞ Is Pakistan courting absurdity?..... 156
☞ And, merrily does the butterfly hop!..... 161
☞ Is a mere "a" or the "the" the question?..... 165
☞ And the score for Pakistan is, 'Love all'!..... 169
☞ Is peace with Pakistan possible?..... 172
☞ The Pak route to *Jehad*..... 176
☞ So they refused their warriors dead!..... 180
☞ Pakistan is unifocal... nay, obsessed!..... 184
☞ No, Pak Army alone is not in it!..... 189
☞ Yeah,... who controls Pakistan?..... 193

Only Stones'? Sure... Mullaji? Confident?.....

By Gawd! How the things, perspectives, appreciations change! The present-day Afghan descendant of the people who carved out those stupendous figures of Lord Buddha... nay, carved whole mountains into stupefying sculptures, says that those specimens of stone carvings in Bamiyan, the finest ever worked by man, are 'only stones'! That he thinks nothing of breaking them down speaks volumes of how coarse the finer senses have grown; how abysmal the understanding that would not know the word 'art'. And, they are out 'civilizing' Afghanistan! Say, how long it would take them to attain to the level of civilization their ancestors possessed, twenty hundred years ago?

Twenty hundred years ago, say the Muslim chroniclers, Arabia was a land of jahula – 'foolish, illiterate, brutes', as per a standard Urdu dictionary. And so, say those learned men, was then Afghanistan. Never mind that Gandhara, as Afghanistan was called then, was the pivot of civilized world and ruled the whole subcontinent from Taxila. Christianity, which was being born there-about, has been more merciful with itself, calling its Greco-Roman ancestry only 'pagan' i.e. 'peasant-like'. The other appellation is not same etymologically. There are no loaded judgments here; certainly no finalities. Probably, the Socratic tradition was too substantial to deny,... the Roman Empire too evident to refute! Anyhow, they did not take on their past with hammers and shovels; and, stopped short of 'civilizing' it.

Not so considerate these wise men of Afghanistan. The 53-meter, 15-storey-high image of Buddha carved from a whole mountain may overwhelm the enlightened men of the twenty-first century yet it somehow does not look substantial enough to the new 'civilizers of Afghanistan'. You may say that, hooded as they are from head to foot in dusty shrouds, the tiny eye-slits therein would not allow much vision, but it is a more serious case of minds behind them having shrunken to the levels where the difference between a stone and a gem-in-stone is not only not discerned but is actually denouneed as being of no significance. The terminology-mongers from Arabia have another expletive, *jahal-i-murakab* – something like a 'doubel-dunderprate' – to designate the stupidity that is not only unaware of itself but deems it wisdom. But alas, even that falls short, far too short to describe this '*aalim*' from Afghanistan.

Yet, make not light of the whole affair. Though some Buddhist countries have been ritually 'disturbed' at Mulla Omer's order to break 'the stones', it is the whole humanity that must get agitated over this courtship of darkness. More so, because it is not only a hooded-shrouded Taliban guerilla ordering demolitions as per his wont, but a whole body of *ulema* backing it. In the Persio-Arabic lexicon, '*aalim*' is loaded a designation – one before which Russell and Einstein put together would appear dawdling toddlers. When *ulema* decree, it is a binding dictum that has religion, reason, logic… all written into it. It is '*afzal*', the best, the most appropriate, most opportune interpretation of an Islamic tenet. Think and shudder, over what the worst could come to!

Over a thousand years ago a similar dictum – that, all the knowledge that was,... would be,... could ever be produced was already contained in a single book—had the magnificent library at

Alexandria burnt down. During the first five hundred years of the last millenium, millions of superb *murtiis*... all over the northern India... were disfigured, broken and made into *bajri* and boulders for buildings and roads, under similar notions of 'advancing civilization'. Those vandalisers too came through, if not all of them from, Afghanistan. If you are wondering how the Buddhas of Bamiyan survived that destruction, remember these are the last surviving art-traces from the rich and robust Gandhara which designated whole northern part of ancient India.

Nor did the destruction end there. Today Fatehpur Sikri, the legacy of the 'well-remembered' Akbar, is getting revealed as a splendid Jaina township that had been razed down and flattened to raise those famed Moghul monuments. And, Akbar was the most tolerant... why, the lone tolerant one... of the India's Muslim rulers. How pale would the *zul-i-ilahi* of the *deen-i-ilahi* fame look when the full extent of what lies underneath his Sikri is exposed? Every bit that is getting excavated tells how glorious that culture and heritage was. Every *murtii* that comes out is *piece-de-resistance* of art. It is also an insistent reminder of how deep the devastation has been during those 'enlightened years'. None knows what sumptuous lots the great Mughal has got buried, besides the luckless Anarkali!

That still was nearly half a millennium ago. The world then, one may say, was less appreciative, less understanding of the heritages and legacies, even cultures. It definitely was less capable of defending vandalism of the rulers. But, today? Does this world realize how easily *jihalat* is being passed out as 'reasoned thought' and 'rational deed'? Probably, not. For, how else could Mulla Ahmad be so sure? So, confident??!!!

***

Heads or tails, they win them both.....

It was a losing game from the very take off. A plane hijack is essentially a losing proposition for the victim nation like, terrorism, which is always a win-win situation for the terrorists, favoring them against a democratic society. And if you have virtually terrorist regimes surrounding you, a plainly usable plank supported by a heady religion, it becomes a nightmarish situation. India came out of the seven-day nightmare, a beaten battered thing. The greatest democracy in the world agreed demurely to everything the half-a-dozen hijackers demanded, and still seemed to be congratulating itself for having got its brood back safely. The prime Minister even presented it a sort of millennium gift to the nation! The best one can wish the prime Minister for the coming year, century and the millennium is to have lesser, better still none, of such dubious gifts.

To be fair to the government, plane hijacks are hard nuts to crack, for even the experienced, more resourceful nations. For a nation that is besieged from within it becomes even harder. That, the Indian negotiations lasted out all the seven days of the ordeal, may itself soon be touted as strength of sorts. In between, the negotiating team even had the consolation of seeing the terrorists scale up their demands ridiculously, and then cut back to essentials. That, probably, was one 'achievement' of the negotiating team—getting the hijackers to give them a face-saving artifice! The hijackers did the needful and the Indians did the needed bending... and the 'crisis' was resolved'. Happily for all the parties except India that is Bharat.

Yes, there was no choice at Kandhaar; indeed, a plane-hijack with hundreds of ducks sitting cramped down gives hijackers all the advantages, all the luck. India had a god-sent opportunity when the place was forced back into India and actually landed at Amritsar. Getting so lucky is rare, but the chance was frittered away in dithering. Thereafter, India in a series of mistaken beliefs expected Pakistan, UAE, and even Afghanistan to do what she herself had failed to do at Amritsar—storm the plane and rescue the passengers. If the calculation was to allow the plane to go out to stick the terrorist muck upon Pak and Afghan faces, it was a far-fetched one. If it was born of a sincere hope that they would—could or should – bail India out of the crisis, it was a naivete... no, foolishness... of the very first order. But then, knaves have never won any wars, even if they win immortality as a Don Quixote.

India, indeed, must shed many of her naïve presumptions if she is to rise as a country of substance in the comity of nations. The mother of all naïve beliefs is the assumption that terrorism can be—and ought to be—fought with a democratic apparatus. Democracy, in its anxiety to protect the individual, sees the state machinery with eyes of suspicion. It takes extra care to guard the citizen. Normally this is an ideal safeguard against the state becoming authoritarian: the state has all the power; the citizenry has only the rights. Hence the protection of the rights becomes paramount. But, this scheme works only for the law abiding citizens for whom, the democratic presumptions hold good. For the terrorist machinery that believes neither in the state nor in the rights and safeguards the state guarantees, the premise of democracy provides a convenient handle to frustrate law as well as the nation. Yasin Malik gunned down a dozen air force men and bragged everywhere about his 'feat'. But before a magistrate he simply denied the charge. No witness came forward for, let us say, the fear of reprisals. Law looks on impotently as the terrorists walks out with a cunning smile.

Democracy gives the citizens a right to rule of law and a fair trial. Those who kill at will and whim and hold out the same threat to anyone apprehending them, even informing upon them, have the pleasure of seeing no one, not even the enforcement machinery, standing in their way. A terrorist can barge into the Human Rights Commission, because the state as such recognizes only citizens and presumes that no outlaws, no rebels exist. The terrorist as a citizen gets heard, but he is never arraigned for the violations or the terror that he wrecks. When that terror is backed directly or indirectly by a religious milieu, you have a situation where every toss of coin ends in a win for the terrorists. If it is heads he wins 'properly', in a legal manner; if it is tails, he goes about killing everyone else and ends up a 'winner'.

At Kandhaar, India was democratically fighting terrorism in its full hideousness. It had the relatives and the sympathizers of the trapped passengers breathing down its neck. It had the Afghan authorities, safeguarding the hijackers, even replenishing their arms inventory. It had its own press and opposition playing out the embarrassments, while the media from across the borders kept telling white lies to obfuscate the international opinions. All thought, the Afghan pretenders pummeled them to capitulate, now with the *jirga* bafflement, now with the airport bills... always with a clear 'no' to any action against the hijackers. The world condemned the hijack, in a theoretical, impersonal way without hinting at how such a dastardly act came to be precipitated and promoted over seven long days.

And, India paid heavily for her initial mistake of letting the rogues go when luck had given her an opportunity to do them in. Their *jirgas* and Islam notwithstanding, the Afghans washed their hands clean by simply asking the hijackers to 'leave their territories' within ten hours! A simple "run away, you fools" was all that India got from the 'honour-loving', 'just', Islamic Republic of Afgthanistan. Terrain of terror can't be negotiated with democratic paraphemalia, nor can the succor of a nation come from false premises and presumptions. Terrorists can't be won over, nor can they be worn out. They have to be confronted with the weapons and language they speak and understand. Or, we shall have to witness the spectacle of their winning every round, now within the law, now out of it, now taking the heads, and now appropriating the tails to themselves.

***

Is understanding a dirty word?.....

The Bangalore resolution of RSS has a precedent... not in 'Hindutva' but in Jinnah. Before he set to use Muslim communalism of League brand to attain his personal ambitions, Ali Mohd Jinnah was fully aware and appreciative of the need for an 'understanding and cooperation' on the part of Muslims towards the Hindus. In one of his presidential addresses from the podium of the same Muslim League, he told the Muslims that "towards Hindus our attitude should be of goodwill and brotherly feelings. Cooperation to the cause of our motherland should be our guiding principle. India's real progress can only be achieved by a true understanding and harmonious relations between the two great sister communities." Understanding and cooperation, the essential goodwill and trust are the only pillars on which all lasting and true relationships can be founded. Without an understanding and appreciation of each other's points and perceptions and respect for each other's positions and beliefs, peaceful coexistence and brotherhood becomes an impossibility. Fraternity has to be fostered not enforced.

Brotherhood must have the sanction of amity and good will of the people. Without that it will remain an empty assurance. Or, an ever-available 'cause' for friction and strife. If the communities are not bound by those inner bonds the assurances of law would remain excuses to deny and demand 'rights' and 'spaces'. There would be points for litigation but the harmony that is sought to be ensured would not come. In the preindependent India, after the depredations of the medieval kings and missionary zealots had ceased, the Hindu and Muslim communities had begun to develop a semblance of those bonds of understanding and respect. In his early days, when Jinnah was 'a man of India' and for India, he clearly saw the need for that understanding and goodwill—both for co-existence as well as the achievement of the objective of freedom. He advocated it over the opposition of people like Sir Syed and League stalwarts like Hasrat Mohani. Then, personal ambition overcame his person and philosophy. It was 'rights and fears'... 'domination and identity'. It swayed the Muslim masses to win him a fief. And, a strife for India.

India has not been able to come out of that fracture caused by personal ambition because the leaders here sought to 'assuage' the Muslim sentiment not integrate it. It was a 'right and assurance' not understanding or goodwill. The 'secularist' today would not listen to the Jinnahian prescription today but would ask the nation to assuage the fears raised by Jinnah when he wanted to score debating points for his communalist agenda. Thus was born the policy of 'appeasement', which BJP once decried and now is implementing with fond zeal. That acceptance of Jinnah's points made this secularism a pseudo concern. It was fashioned to win over the Muslims, to answer the 'grievances' but never to address the basic question of integration. It is not that the liberal-secularist clique did not know the importance of that understanding and goodwill. They knew it, appreciated it, used it for other communities and groups but somehow refused to apply it to main minority.

Thus Nehru, when he came to Sringar to sing '*man-tu-shudam-tu-man-shudii*' with Sheikh Abdullah, he bluntly told the minority of Hindus of Kashmir that goodwill of the majority alone can help them , that they must cultivate it and get into the mainstream. However, at the national level, the same liberal leadership pampered minority concerns, instituted what came to be called the pseudo policies and laid the framework for appeasement. The need for understanding and goodwill was dispensed with. Instead, we had legal sanctions. And today we find that the society, which Jinnah fractured for attaining his fief, is split vertically. A generation of Muslim leadership in this country has grown on these demands and safeguards without ever having heard of goodwill or understanding. The emphasis, which our time and age places on 'identity' and 'rights', has added another mite to this fracture. Together we have a situation where understanding itself has become a dirty word. And, an appeal to seek amity and goodwill is looked upon as 'communalism'.

Indeed, so unacceptable has the very word 'understanding' become that the whole secular brigade was up in arms the other day over the Bangalore resolution speaking of amity and goodwill. Yet these are the things that Jinnah and Nehru spoke of. This is what Gandhi stressed all the time. Understanding and amity is the only way to goodwill. And, goodwill of one for the other is what makes us human. The resolution rightly says that understanding cannot be enforced—it has to be built and cultivated. Harmony can come only from a positive understanding that takes the perspectives of all communities into consideration. It is not through more provisions in the statute book. Those provisions may be desirable, but nothing will help heal India without a realization that this is India, our India, a country not a cake; that there must be respect and acceptance all through. And every irritant whether it is Mir Baqi's mosque or the Bin Laden fulmination has to be seen, studied and resolved from the perspective of harmony and national construction not as demands and rights. Understanding and goodwill is the key to rebuild this nation and resurrect its spirit. It is the only key, whatever your politics may say!

***

‘Two Nation’ by a different name!.....

What is in a name, asked the bard, and freed the world from shrouds of subterfuge. But, probably, not thoroughly enough! For, four hundred years... why, a millennium later people still find use for shifty stratagems. Because, they’re pressing for equally shifty stances? Half a century ago, Jinnah’s Two Nation Theory was a dirty word in this part of the sub-continent. It still is an anathema, yet the curse is getting reinstated by being cloaked in the acceptable, democracy-friendly expressions like ‘aspirations’ ‘peoples’ empowerment’, ‘federalism’, ‘autonomy’... Now, there can’t be any quarrel with any of these words; they represent some of the most cherished goals of human emancipation. But, if they end up camouflaging sinister implications, they threaten to shake the very foundations of freedom.

Take the so called ‘special positions’ for that matter. Humans are said to be something special in the scheme of creation. Super creature—*ashraf-ul-mukhlooqat*—we call him. Hitler also called Germans ‘special’ and took the whole human race to the brink of destruction. Getting called ‘special’, was the undoing of the German nation. That ‘special’ was abnormal because it established a section alone as ‘special’. Now the same word has served to accord respectability to Jinnah’s religious nationalism, albeit under a thin veil.

Two-nation theory held that Hindus and Muslims, because of their religions, formed two ‘nations’. Indian nationalism, based on affinity not religion, rejected that notion and built its republic with units that believed in Indian nationalism. That nation took pride in the fact that while the majority of the Muslims had opted for Jinnah's nationalism; a Muslim majority state had chosen to stay clear of the religious distinctions and allied with Indian nationalism. For, it is a fact that more than Maharaja, it was Sheikh Abdullah who pressed for accession and brought it about. But, someone, somewhere, forgot about the nationalism and created a 'special' Kashmir. And, birthed Jinnah's djin anew... right upon the Indian soil.

Now, what does a 'special status' for J&K mean? Jammu does not want anything special that is not given to the other nationals of India. Ladakh wants to be even more integrated with the nation as a Union Terrority. It is only Kashmir, with its particular Muslim majority, which needs a 'special status' with its attendant instruments of 370, a separate constitution, state subject and now autonomy. Why does the only Muslim majority state in India need a special status within the Indian nation? Is the Indian dispensation prejudiced against any region or state? Does the Constitution of India carry a single world, a single provision, that is tilted in favour of or against any community, any creed?

Or, do the laws of the Republic of India discriminate against any sect, race or religion? Yet, the constitutional guarantees that suffice for a billion Indians are, apparently, not sufficient to safeguard the 'interests' of the sole Muslim majority state in the country. Calling it a 'secular solution' is wrong because it gravely compromises the concept of non-religious nationalism. It stinks of the two-nation theory, and awfully so. Why a special status? Why a tenuous link, whose only 'aspiration' is to further thin out that bond? Why this religious separatism under a shrift and shroud, if here is a nationalism that rejects religion as a basis of state? What justifies 'greater autonomy' for this particular state, which already enjoys enormous powers, while the other twenty-five states do not enjoy even a fraction of those powers?

Kashmir's accession to India should not be taken not a certificate for Indian secularism, nor its nationalism but a vindication of the secular character of Kashmir. Unlike what the mistaken legislators of NC hold, India has nothing to be indebted to Sheikh Abdullah and his family for to India accession though, Kashmir ought to be thankful to them for that act of sagacity. In any case, it is obligatory for NC and Kashmir to prove in deed that its notion of nationalism rejects region, race and religion. That is done not by seeking special concessions for its religious composition but by eschewing 'special status' and standing at par with the other states of the union. Then the demands for autonomy, federalism, even con-federation will carry a nationalist import, for they would be sought for all states, all peoples, uniformly, on a national basis.

The communal contour of the rationale for a special status for Kashmir is as clear as it is sinister: Kashmir cannot live with the guarantees of the Constitution of India and needs a special status, special empowerments with special curtailments as have been placed on the Constitution of India for the past fifty years. The Autonomy Resolution is only a logical extension of the separatist rationale, wanting to take these special provisions further.....towards a truer realization of Jinnah's gospel?

Yes, that is what the basic concept of special status implies. That is what the Autonomy Report strives for. That is what the separatists/insurgents stand for. That is what the nationalist in Kashmir must remind the pseudo-nationalists there. As it is, the Autonomy Resolution is just a thinly shrouded ghost of Jinnah.

***

History As A Perspective.....

"All the economists of the world, laid end to end, "said Bernard Shaw, "would not reach a conclusion." One may supplement it and say that all the historians added together would not make a fact or a certainty. A couple of months back, yours randomly had the chance fortune of meeting a man. Quite a robust, good-meaning fellow, but he turned out to be a professor of History at JNU, New Delhi. Thinking this a god-sent opportunity to brush up a few facts of one's history, I asked him as to what exactly happened to Prithvi Raj Chohan, after his defeat at the hands of Mohd. Ghouri. The professor, very patiently, explained that though his period was medieval, his field being social history, he was not the right man for the question. "In any case" he continued, "nothing definite is known." It was out of question, asking him about the anti-social Jai Chand, or what treatment he meted out to his sister Sanyukta, the original cause of many of modern India's ills. Now, when history becomes social, facts get lost in perspective and you get research but no certainty. You may get a Ph.D, but what about enlightenment? One doesn't know.

As any, and every, historian of the day will tell you, history is not about the activities of this king and that prince. It is about the people, they will tell you, and lighten your guilt of ignorance a thousand fold. Now, who said there is no enlightenment? One only wonders if historians watch cricket and remember the runs scored? One also wonders what Kalhan Pandit is doing among these date-less historians; he is so obsessed with kings and their dates in the Kali era. Thankfully we have researchers now, who are ploughing uncertain furrows uncertain to let his River of Kings flow and making it suitably faceless... err, date-less and constructing this missing aspect of our antiquity. In near future, we shall become, as they say in textile ads, 'the complete men', with the social tail right in the place, where from Darwin presumed it jutted out.

Yours randomly also thinks that he is a more complete man because sometime back he read a scholar's exposition on the vital-to-life controversy about Iqbal's date of birth. Feb, 22, 1873 versus Nov 9, 1877. The later, said the researcher, Iqbal had recorded in this own hand, while the former date has been dredged out by researchers, who know better. The controversy still ranges. Now, it appears that the "entire perspective of our freedom struggle will change" as the Indian council for Historical Research shall present the nation with a multi-historian effort bringing us "Towards Freedom." With this Indian perspective in place, ones hopes that doctoring of history will be complete and so shall be the happiness of the common man. For, after all, it is for the benefit of this poor fellow, sleeping by the road side, underneath the shop-awning, that this change in perspective is highly desirable. It could lead to the dismantling of that shady awning, (if that awning turned out to be a relic of the Raj) relieving him of the need to sleep under it. Freedom, you know, comes in varied shapes!

Re-interpretation is a historians' right, as much as it is the right of the common men to ignore it, engrossed as he is with the more vital affairs of life; vital or mundane, depending on the perspective. Like true or false, depending on which side of the fence you are! The universality was gone even before Einstein, because Newton also defined motion in relative terms. History it appears is never to be a truthful representation... nor is life. Nor freedom. Nor truth, if you are too insistent. Mankind has subsisted on a diet of prevarications for quite too long to retain much respect for truth. His passions (and hers more so) can be flared only with doctored figures and laced facts. One wonders if the saying that "man is a rational being" implies that his truths must be cautiously, considerately and deliberately rationed. And spiced too, for effect?

Yes, time is the lone equalizer that brings the judge and the judged to a level pyre. Meanwhile, if there is a 'their truth', it is imperative that you have 'your truth', became for every fact there ought to be versions, and for every untruth, justifications. Say, how shall we live upon this globe, if there were no strife, no attrition, no untruths to uphold, and no truths to fight against? Man shall become prey to unhealthy quietitude and the thousand 'causes' agitating his mind shall die a Dodo's death, and a thousand people shall have to look for honest occupations. And, the man charged with keeping this world going shall have betrayed his trust Long live historians, social ones included, who cannot add up to a fact!

***

All clevers on one side!.....

Some call it the irony of the modern judicial system. Others decry it as a travesty of justice. All are seized of the fact a judicial pronouncement is only as good as the presentation before the court. Logically the merit of the case 'would' determine whether it is the prosecution or the defense that would get the better argument. On that assumption depends the whole truth of justice. Practically, unless the case is overwhelmingly one-sided, it is the better presentation, the more clever argument that caries the day, the court and the decision. Therein lies the value of an advocate. An adept one knows the law inside out and fits his case in it. Of course, that is not an earth shaking discovery; people have known that truth for ages. And, suffered for it. Lawyers have known it too and lied their ways to success through careful modeling of truth. That covenent with untrue made Gandhi an indifferent lawyer, if not an outright failure.

That also made him a good politician. He wouldn't plead a false case and became a truthful advocate of the political aspirations. But we have come a long way since the days of bad-advocate entering the politics. Today the *crème de la crème* of the profession alone can venture into political arenas, because the need is for their cleverness not clarity. Politics accordingly has become a game of clever presentations not perceptions. And all that this nation sees is a clever bluff calculated to win the day. Never mind if that victory damns the nation. Thus sometime back we had the clever men in the parliament opposing POTA, quoting American presidents to prove that a terrorist ravaged country does not need an anti-terrorist law and succeeding!

We have also other set of cleverness's showing that best way to develop this country is to keep it poor. Even as the world over it has been shown that poverty has to be eradicated not preserved, this set of sharpshooters has contrived a whole body of agruments to prove that the best way for this nation and society is to remain engrossed in poverty.

That cleverness foils every attempt in the country to get out of the rut of poverty. It has succeeded in calling that cleverness a poor-friendly policy, which none must abandon. Never mind the fact that the very fonts of communism have given up those pretences and opted to combat poverty with drastic... almost cruel... measures. They seem to be succeeding there, but those examples are not be invoked. Massive labor retrenchments in China are not to be cited; the total draconian-ness of that regime is not to be counted. Its obsessive ideation of nationalism is not to be emulated to buttress the foundations of this nation. The liberals in England, America or Europe were all fiercely nationalist. They still are. There, the nation always comes first. In fact, nationalism is a near-paranoia there. The closing up of the ranks in America in the wake of WTC is just one instance. We see it in almost all things that impinge on the nation there. The Indian masses too close up and coalesce as one formidable wall but the intellectual milieu is rarely delighted. They work overtime to read identities and fractions in a single Indianness here. They diligently try to understand the Pakistani point but dismiss the implications of that position for the Indian interest and nation.

Thus the political compulsions' of Musharraf are presented as a sort of justification for his fundamentalist position, but the nation of India is not permitted to take even appropriate measures to combat the onslaught of those very acts. One may not call that cleverness mean but it certainly is an instance of too much of sincerity proving fatal, as Bernard Shaw said it invariably is. And, contrived history for India is just one aspect of that clever liberalism. Calling the Gurus who were martyred for dharma 'looters' and revilers and portraying Gaznavi as a 'secular' though somewhat fierce king, has been commented upon by many people, yet the liberal clique has shown little evidence of having accepted its error. The refusal to modify their useful 'facts' of history in light of new findings is almost an article of faith there, whether it is the age of Vedas, the interface of Indus-Aryan civilizations, or the 'tolerance' of Aurangzeb.

Selective and biased they rarely follow the logic they insist others must adhere to, in all circumstances at all places. But so clever are they at their presentations that they are able to get away with anything. Thus they carefully downplay the stress Gandhi laid on dharma but take his advocacy of Hindustani to the very extreme. In Gujarat they stress the reaction and use the riots that were provoked instantly by the planned conspiracy of Godhara conflagration to condemn ethos of the whole nation. The hundreds of temples burnt in Pakistan and Bangladesh, after the December 1992 is dismissed as 'reactions'. Another of Gandhi's insistence that the majority should be accommodative of the minorities is used as a virtual stick to beat the majority concerns in the whole country but when the minorities in Jammu and Kashmir demand a similar treatment, it is drubbed communalism.

The greatest travesty is when vote-bank politics, disruptive and disjointing as it is, is justified as emancipation. Efforts to consolidate nationalism are harangued as communalism and hanged! And all this is done so cleverly that the people, even as they know that they are being deceived, cannot call it deception. The clever scheme succeeds and the nation suffers. It is unfortunate that the interests of all clever people have gone against this nation and have turned anti-nationalism in all aspects, all spheres into a dharma of sorts!

Belly dancers and skull dredgers, all!.....

Internationally, the year 1998 ended with the Anglo-American missiles raining over Iraq. The New Year has begun with a no-holds-barred slanging match between Iraq and Egypt over the same missile issue. Even before the New Year was 24 hours old, Egypt accused Saddam Hussain of killing 5,596 Egyptian citizens, (way back in 1988-89) and wanted him tried in an International court of Crimes for Genocide. A cartoon in the official newspaper showed Saddam Hussein sitting upon a pile of skulls, presumably of these 5,596 Egyptians. Iraq responded with depicting Hosni Mubarak as a belly-dancer gyrating to Anglo-American music and earning applause from Bill Clinton. One drags the other into the stinking mire of disrepute, and now both are there together. Besmeared. Befouled. Unnecessarily. Undeservedly.

Egypt and Iraq. Two of the most ancient of civilization. Two gifts of God—one with Nile, the other with Tigris-Eurpharats twin. One with pyramids, another with Babyalon. Two seats of *khilafat* in the era of Muslim ascendancy—Cairo and Baghdad. Two egalitarian countries in an otherwise hopelessly feudal Arab world: two peoples who, if only because of their cultural depth, should have been for the Aalam-i-Islam leading lights of law, reason and rationality. And freedom. Whose history and promise should have made them shiny examples to lead the Arab world out of the medieval dusk? But who... alas, are actually plunging it deeper into the chaotic morass because...yes, because one is a belly dancer and another a skull dredger. Ironic? Shameful betraying? Probably, it is the inevitability, when personal interest overrides concerns of nationhood; when megalomania and calculations come to be the prime pre-occupations; when man ceases to be human and becomes a creature of instinct—insecure, shifty, manipulating.

Iraq and Egypt symbolize a lot that has been wrong with this second millennium of the Christian era in general, and with this fading century in particular. Standing at this pile of two thousand years man seems a taller... much taller being when, in fact, he is only standing upon a heap of desire and dancing to tunes of narrowing interest and vision. 44 years ago when Nasser ousted General Neguib he founded a nation that promised to be a lighthouse in the Arabian Peninsula. When saddam took over the reigns of Ba'ath party and Iraq 30 years ago, the same promise glimmered again. Today, one is leading his country to a willed disaster, while another is gloating in the role of America's errand-boy. Today, the world is a brittle fracas of heightened self-interest where all nobility is shrunken into either arrogance or the borrowed glory of aid, assistance and approval by the powerful of the world.

Yes, Boutros – Boutrous Galli was an Egyptian who paid for the 'honour' bestowed upon him with an ignomious humiliation at the end. Kofi Annan is another "honoured" African, who has been slapped early in his term by the real princes of the world with their messing Iraq. Yes, more the world changes, more it remain the same. A hundred years earlier, the world was a map full of discordant principalities, all up in arms, all fighting for the "honour", upkeep and "glory" of their princes. A hundred years later, the formation of the principalities has changed,... the princes too have changed,... (except, of course, in the Arab world), but the feuds and fractious are there in place only more accentuated, more fierce, more facilitated with the modern gadgetry.

"Happiness....", said that the American Bill of Rights; 'missiles', said Bill Clinton. 'Freedom' cried Gamal Abdel Nasser and led Arabs into the six-day war. 'Equality' said, part-Marxist part-nationalist Saddam and marched Iraqis into "the mother of all wars." Now he has come a full circle, from the ostracism of early nineties, with endorsement by the whole Muslim world, as a hero of the sorts for the faithful. If Dr Talibi, the Director of Islamic Studies Institute in Sudan is to be believed, there, i.e. in that hero-ship, Saddam has only one rival—Bin Laden! Freedom, equality, respect for others, even self-respect,... all are many useful devices for inglorious goals. Of course, Egypt is a respected member of the non-aligned movement. Non-alignment, that egalitarian Nehruvian concept of righteous truthfullness! So is Iraq. So may America soon be if Nelson Mendela has his way. 'But', to steal Marcus Anthony's line, 'Mendela is an honourable man'.

Why, NAM is already a discotheque of sorts with its members vying with one another to partner one power or other lesser powers in the hope of aid, assistance and acceptance. It is easier still for the august members who swear by socialism, equality and freedom, to turn into ruthless dictators, and reduce whole peoples into heaps of skulls. Probably, it is easier to dance for selfish tunes on hillocks of skulls, than on plain ground, in this last year of the ...., momentous, righteous century! Eh!!

***

Fiddle, Neroes fiddle, India burns well.....

Serial blasts, replete with human bombs, dumps of arms and explosives and dare-devil terrorists, have shaken the once peaceful Coimbatore, in that.... again once... peaceful citadel called South India. Coimbatore is known for spice trade not secessionism: it is entering history with bangs, blasts and rampant violence of a clearly communal hue. Tamil Nadu itself narrowly missed the unwanted distinction of blowing up two most popular leaders of modern India—both conspiracies having been hatched outside India. But while Sriperumbador had shaken the nation, Coimbatore blasts have spent their reverberations within the confines of the city. Never mind if the blasts continued the second day; never mind if four school children were blown up on the third day; never mind the implications that have far reaching imperatives which do not answer short goals of adhoc politicking. Adhocism is what the national politics has evolved into after fifty years; goals are conveniently near, policies suitably narrow and nation is hardly the concern. It is as easy as fiddling.

11th Lok sabha bore two governments. During these two years not a single hard decision that the national interest demanded, was taken. Whether it was containing the budget deficit, or to stem the rot in the body politic and administration, or the enforcement of ordinary law and order, every issue saw a dithering. 9th plan continues to be in limbo and may well hang there if a hung house is retuned in March. On an issue like corruption the government studiously abstained from any action, not even asking the indicted ministers to quit. On grave constitutional matters too, it was either no action or a partisan over-reaction. Leadership of every colour remained busy appeasing this section, winning over that lobby, pampering yet another, weighing every truth in terms of loss and gain in votes. But nations are not built on vote-calculations, nor sustained on short-term aims. Nation building demands hard, may be unpalatable, decisions geared to long-term objectives. And, statesmanship asks for calling a spade a spade, every time, always, irrespective of self-interest, party consideration, or vote calculation. In this election when eloquence is at the highest pitch, is there a flute singing for the nation? For truth?

North East is on high boil. The routine violence in Nagaland apart, Manipur and Tripura are deep in the mire. ULFA and Bodo terrorists seem to have an upper hand is Assam. In Kashmir guns continue to boom, bombs and bullets fly and people are fleeing in disarrayed scatter. Punjab is ominously mum, while sponsored terrorism is seeping into Himachal. Deeper down the violence is even more incisive in that there is no foreign hand stoking it. Here it is a perpetration of evil designs, criminal aggregations and political manipulations that seek to decide the people's will through the wish of brute force. Bihar and Andhra are in the grip of menacing communist extremists, who are working under the camouflage of social justice. Though these gangs may not have grouped with the sole objective of wielding guns, their penchant for gunning down any dissent, within or without their ranks, shows that a booming gun has attained to the status of a tenet with them.

Then, of course, there are dubious characters, doubtful integrities and outright criminal's bulleting the ballot. Every political party is ready with the figure of "criminals" fielded by the other parties, their names and the number of cases pending against them, while the ones propped up by them are either "needed" or "inevitable" or else plain "saints" maligned by the mischievous opponents"!

Is anybody concerned? All are fiddling in indifferent bliss, their sights and minds hooked to winning the race. Winning for whom? Not at all for India, which continues to burn, continues to flounder and is fast tending towards a disintegration that even the fleeing Brits did not dare to wish, fifty years ago! Everybody is eager to lead, minister and prime-minister of the nation, but the tottering of nation is nobody's concern; the nation getting numbed and blasted is not on agenda, nor is the splintering off the nation. Law and order, security of the ordinary citizen, the protection of the right to life, get no emphasis in any manifesto. Neither is a stake in truth there in those dainty booklets of promise and pledge.

Nations are held together by truth, not by field's sticks, nor by dubious policies—not at all by exigencies, where every truth is a compromise, every utterance a ploy, every tenet a scheme for private ends. Kesri calls Coimbatore blasts "RSS-handiwork", Fernandes convenes seminars for LTTE, Vajpayee discounts the pointed truths of Jain Commission, Naidu keeps mum on People's War Groups, Mahanta dallies with extremists, while saint Basu is meditating to-be-or-not-to-be. And people die; in Coimbatore, in Kashmir, in Assam, in Bihar, in Andhra, in Delhi,... everywhere. Innocent people going to vote die; innocent people going to meetings die; innocent people on streets die. And India burns with a musical refrain, while Neroes fiddle, and fiddle, and fiddle their straw reeds.

***

Flawed theories, faulty prescriptions!.....

When Faiz talked of *yeh daag daag ujala yeh shabgazeedah sahar* (this blemished light, this night-bitten morn) he was not speaking of the Indian state. He, with others of his tribe, had not envisioned an India. It was the Land of Pure they had carved out and helped to fill out. And, when it failed in their face, they cried out. India has progressed apace. She has been able to stand aloft and weave some of the newest glories into her being. But amid all this good work there is a frustration that all the promises made to India have not all been redeemed. In many cases, the very achievements with their avoidable after-effects have become the bane of the nation. India today is a robust competitor of the most advanced nations in the spheres, which those nations consider as the parameters of progress. Thus from computers to allopathy, space science to ammunition factories, India is giving the developed world a run for its money. Indians are manning their establishments from the Wall Street to NASA.

India has been able to ride the tide of modernism well. In fact she has ridden it so well that it has become an obsession and has trifled everything else. There is an emphasis on the social and cultural aspects but this is more an antiquarian's concern than an attempt to revitalize this land. The attempt is to preserve these cultural and social artifacts and curios in a Museum for the world not to rejuvenate those robust traditions and to be built upon. India had the answers when the new world had not even ventured to ask the questions. But those answers were simply dismissed. We created computer scientists but fractured the social motherboards that had been unique to this land. The premises and promises of India were derided as unworthy. Intellectuals took pride in breaking asunder Indian traditions and customs, the politicians parceled out Indian society into groups and interests, and social activists built lobbies in a nation that was one unit.

This has come about with interplay of misconstrued models as well as misconceived methodologies that have been tried on this luckless country. Thus the secular paradigm was based on the 'secularism' of the English and the Europeans. But the Europeans had never been 'secular'. They still aren't. Thus while anybody, probably even a non-Indian can be a president in India, nobody but a protestant can be the king in the 'mother of democracies'. The 'secular' did never mean in those countries what it was made to imply in this country. Throughout its two centuries the British Raj in India was a foster mother to Missionary activities; the Christian Church carried on its campaign to 'win souls for the Christ' with explicit blessing of the government. The Raj depended on them to provide stout pillars for the continuance of colonialism here. The 'selfless' researchers, who worked overtime to unravel the Indian puzzle, did so with a very clear slant. A very selfish motive of promoting colonial and missionary agendas lurked in every word and deed of theirs.

They interpreted histories and languages, societies and communities in India in the very narrow, very religious perspective of their motherlands in Europe. These men performed monumental works, but they also did their bits to crack the edifice of India. From

Indus Valley excavations to Linguistic Survey of India. a clear attempt to undermine the oneness of the country, to denounce the essential integrity of the nation of India, is hard to ignore. Nehru's Discovery of India is seen by many as an answer to these disruptions driven in with sagacity and scholarship. But unfortunately for India, after independence denigrating India became the agenda of the liberal/ secular brigade. They depended upon the interpretations of the British ideologists to understand the history. They relied on the methods used by the colonialists to divide the Indian nation together.

Like their brethren in the leftist ranks who were trying to force-fit India into the theories of Marx, they tried to squeeze the Indian realities into the prescriptions of Spencer and Fabian Socialists. And, like the communists, failed in the attempt. But that failure was never seen as flaw in the theories. Instead, they pronounced that it was India that was wrong. Thus sociological constructs derived from small-scale models of single-religion societies in Europe and else where, were situated on the Indian society. Instead of being studied for its innate strengths that had enabled it to live and survive through millenia the Indian society was sought to be 'restructured' and 'refined'. Indian laws became an anathema. Indian system was somehow deemed inapplicable to India. Whether it was the community development model imported from America or the planning concept of Russian vintage, or the versions of colonial historians, every effort was made to improvise and impose on India not to improve and understand its own institutions.

The governments did not think of even revising the laws the British had imposed to facilitate the colonial rule. A most curious illustration is seen in the service-rules. The government employees are explicitly forbidden from taking any active part in the elections even thought they constitute the most advanced, most educated segment of the society. By barring it out of the most vital aspect of democratic functioning the doors were opened for the entry of the corrupt, incompetent, and less educated elements. The elite segment could serve the lumpen but not presume to compete with them in the polls because, the employee was a 'servant'! Even the Constitution of India was a filled out version of the British Government of India Act 1935. India, as the nation—self-dependent and self-driven with its own institutions and traditions—was never taken into consideration. That India still lives out there in this land, but the India the liberal/secular brigades tried to fabricate is a fractured shambles. It is frustrating the real India in thought, act and deed, day in and day out.

***

Communist contortions of nationalism.....

Indian nationalism which had been an incipient undercurrent of the sub-continental psyche received its highest assertion during the first half of the twentieth century. Most probably, the Muslim would be an inalienable part of it. Indeed, the Urdu Press till 1920 comes through a strong supporter of the nationalist urge. By then it caught up with the high priests of religious-nationalism Sir Syed et.al. And by forties when freedom looked imminent, it became a rabid communalist organ for propagation of whatever Jinnah proclaimed over the Muslim League platforms. All this ran counter to the nationalist fervor that was forcing the imperialism out of the country. Its clear aim was to stem the rising nationalism. Though the realization of the nationalist urges was too deep to be drowned by this effort, it did succeed in denting the edge. A section of the people was finally persuaded not to be a part of the nationalism.

Of course, the greatest beneficiaries of this fracture were the English rulers. They had been fostering, if not actually orchestering, this effort from the days of Aligrah movement. The other movement that came to subvert the idea of Indian nationalism during the forties and following decades was communism. This was a movement that was actually suppressed by the British in its formative years. But by the forties a realignment of the forces in Europe had taken place after Germany invaded Russia. The Indian communism received orders to support the empire and the faithful followers shifted their alliance.

Action of the communists during this time against the freedom struggle has been well documented. But the contortions this movement imposed upon Indian nationalism after independence have not received equal notice. Over the past half a century, communists have been undermining the idea of Indian nationalism, ridiculing it, loosening every brick in its foundation as if in a grand conspiracy. It is said that they have, mostly, been well-meaning souls with good of the Indian people at their hearts but then—as the well known axiom says—more calamities have been brought about in this world by sincere intentions than wicked ones. They did it all from the high pedestal of an ideology. Their motivation was promotion of the ideology that they thought good rather than wholesome, unprejudiced pursuit of knowledge. That was an age when the communist ideology was synonymous with liberation, humanism, emancipation... indeed, all that has been good in the human thought.

The oppression of the centuries weighed heavy on the minds of the people. Poor came to be easily perceived as an entity, a class. Generations of thinkers have slid down this slope to land in a milieu that rejected Indian society and its norms and conventions... Indian nationalism and its premises and parameters, in favour of an ideology that was supposed to be universal. When it was not clear communism, it was socialism or a loose leftist leaning. People tended to distinguish the three but they were only phases, stages along the steep climb up the pure Marxist ideology. Only it was neither pure nor an ideology. Its purity became suspect when Commintern, the International Communist Organization became an organ for advancing Russian interests. Its ideology betrayed itself when it aligned with fascism, Nazism and then imperialism for short-term benefits.

But its blithe adherents here, and in many other places too, saw none of these flaws. They didn't see the clear rejection of universalism when the Russian and Chinese influences (interests) carved the Indian communists into two mutually antagonist groups. The most glaring blindness was shown with respect to the nationalism here. When communist movement failed to become a nation-wide force it set about fanning regional and sectarian identities to gain pockets of influence. All the 'regional leaders' who have over the years come to represent 'local' aspirations have been stranded there by the communist, socialist or leftist boats. They remain covert negators of the Indian nationalism. On the other hand, thousands of other communist 'recruits'—academicians, philosophers, social scientists—have embarked upon a vast project to belabor every symbol of national identity.

Indian society had resisted Islamic and the Christian wedges and had fought British efforts to split it for their imperial ends. It was cleaved vertically by these soft spoken seers who saw no good anywhere here. There were negative influences in the Indian society for sure, but it has had a far greater measure of positive content. It is this positive fund that has sustained this civilzation on its long history and prevented its being effaced like its fellow travelers. It was also the reason why communism had not succeeded here. So the foot soldiers of Communism took to dismantling the Indian society, bit by bit, part by part, all through its language, culture, social structure, literature and art, philosophy….everything that came handy. Indian philosophy was 'proved' to be 'nothing', the society 'exploitative', the Indian mores were 'shown' to be 'wrong' and every achievement here was soundly trashed.

The truth that contemporaneous societies and polities in other parts of the world not only came nowhere near the Indian standards but were downright brutal was never told. The communist effort simply castigated the Indian society, culture and ethos. It could not but dampen the nationalism. It did so. The nationalism that was so emphatic at the start of independence has almost receded into that incipient mode which has seen the nation divided into countless 'identities' and becoming an easy prey for invaders to trample it under their feet. If today the nation is crying for elements to re-assert its idea, it is thanks to these denigrators who have caused the fervor of nationalism to be dissipated, knowingly or in ignorance.

***

Willing executioners of History....

Out in the dark over the snow,
The fallow fawns invisible go,
With the fallow doe.

-Edward Thomas . *Out in the Dark*

Man is human and lives in a society. Society as the composite of human being has an individuality, a presence of its own. It inspires and guides men along the permissible path as much as deters them from entering upon forbidden ventures, through its forceful approval/ disapproval mechanism. All movements originate from the social proclivities, the thought-currents permeating it. Society leads men with the aid of the figures embodying its urges. American society gave the ideal of freedom to humanity; it also condoned enslavement of a whole race. Faceless masses of southern America played mid-wife to the birth of Ku Klux Klan and the European people were mute proponents of persecution of Jews, much before Hitler came upon the scene.

About a year ago, in early 1996, Daniel Gold Hagen of Harvard University published a book Hitler's Willing Executioners— and re-opened the debate on the World War II. Only, this debate put war away from its accepted symbol, Hitler, and focused upon the Hitler's symbionts, the general public of Germany. The thesis Gold Hagen presented was that the Germans had unwillingly approved all Hitlerian policies with their tacit, yet unequivocal, approval and thus were culpable in thought, if not in deed, for the atrocities. Truth being imbued with that strangely irritating quality, the book had the Germans up and snorting fierce, indignant airs. Now, a year of cogitation has allowed the truth to seep and take a fuller measure of the people, who may even have goaded Hitler to move from one excess to another. Germans helped Jews to escape, hid them, shielded them, but this saner segment was a miniscule one, while the major chunk of the people stood solidly behind Hitler, lauding his attempts to restore them to 'purity, glory and grandeur'. For the first time, the bluff of acquciescent masses has been called.

History is replete with instances where the people have been willing accomplices in perpetrating misery, onslaught, death and destruction upon their brethren. What is even more shocking, the contemporary history has severed little from the past, in following this negative percept. Often, the man at large has escaped accounting for his actions with an innocent look, under the pretext of extenuating circumstances, shifting all responsibility to a coterie of leaders. It is difficult to perceive that the tremendous forces of history could have been unleashed without the conniving stoking of a general populace.

Early centuries of this millennium saw hordes of Christan Crusaders move from Europe to Arabia to 'redeem and recover' the relics and religious places of Christianity from Mohammedan occupation. Behind every battalion of Templars that moved out of Europe, stood the sanction and sentiment of the Christian masses. The first and probably the largest of these contingents was led by a 'pious' man, Peter the hermit, who never reached the Holy-land. During his passage through the principalities of Europe men, women and children accompanied Peter's bands for miles together. It is this approval and support of the faceless mass of people that launches the crusades of history. The understanding applause drawn by

Bindranwale's Chowk Mehta speech and the surging mobs that thronged the processions of Kashmir terrorists are in the same genre.

History is home to paradoxes. Life to stranger contradictions. It takes, for example, a sharp mind to become a scientist, a reformer, a mathematician or a computer-buff; it needs a sharper mind to be a crook, a swindler or a computer hack disrobing film actress. The same goes for revolutions. People's urges have given birth to momentous surges of opinion that have molded the destiny of man to a proper shape. Again, the people, if enslaved to slanted visions, turn themselves into reckless witch-hunters, who would give no quarter to God, much less a poor man. For about a thousand years, the Jews, dispersed over the European nations, experienced this popular malevolence. Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice celebrates this attitudinal kink. Marlowe's The Jew of Malta, is as even more explicit exposition of the same hideous bent.

The post-war world for all its pious assertions has failed to exorcise all the malfeasant ghosts. Ethnic cleansing, eviction even annihilation of whole communities, is taking place all over the world. Bosnian purging have been exercising the global mind for the better part of nineties. Somehow, the same urgency of concern was not evoked, especially in our part of the world, by the Somallian internecine war, the 'Hutu-Tutu' conflict falls in the same class, kurds have the misfortune of having, not one but three perversely bent peoples against them. The Hindus of Kashmir have been systematically hounded out of their homes. Though the Mohajirs in Pakistan, being in better numbers are fighting another group of history's willing executioners they are steadily going down.

Doesn't this complicity of people call for questioning? For a good century a 4-million White minority held the blacks of South Africa under unequal apartheid. Everything the White leaders did had the active support of this populace. When the then president Botha undid this polity of perversity, he had to face the wrath of this people. Summer and Rosewood were two adjoining hamlets in Florida, the former White and the later Black. In 1923 the inhabitants of Summer rose en-mass and decimated Rosewood; all houses were razed and most of the Blacks were killed. The few who escaped did not dare to open their mouths for 70 long years. It was only in the late 1980's that the happening was revealed, in any detail, to history. Why? Would it be wrong to say that the White America has been a willing executioner of this most murky of racial decrepitudes?

In Libel law, a person may sue another person or a group, if his or her reputation has been damaged in some way by that person, but no suit lies if one insinuates against a whole class of people, say all lawyers or doctors. The reverse applies in history: particular persons are recognized as the culprits, perpetrators, executioners of crimes but the large public, at large, that goads them, encourages them and approves of them, is never mentioned, much less implicated in the heineous crime. A mere disapproving frown of this large mass would check the executioners of perversity, but when the masses choose a nodding silence—at times a back-slapping, too—the banal executioners, can hardly be called lone perpetrators. They have willing partners in the conveniently silent mobs.

A question that will always be asked is, why? Why do people become silent spectators? More importantly, why do they lend support to movements that have patently false ideals? Why does the general public get swayed by sectarian, religious and ethnic rhetoric when everyday brings home to us the interdependence of man and the essential equality of all creeds, colours and races? Why this malfeasance? Why does a Sindhi kill a Mohajir and laugh? Why does a Muslim turn out his Hindu brother, and feel the pride of an achievement? Why did a German clap, every time a Jew was pushed into a concentration camp? Probably, we in all of us harbour dark souls; we have parts that are loathsome, cruel and hateful. These facets needs be curbed and held in proper check if man is to live. And for that the complicity of the faceless mass must be pinned and pointed out. The guilt is shared and it must be appropriately apportioned.

***

It's the Kargil rebound.....

Talking of Pakistan, it is not usual there that what the Generals propose the civilians may dispose. But the latest round has definitely gone to the civilians who have roundly soured whatever elation Musharraf may have found at the end of his Washington visit. That visit may not have bought Pakistan much but it did give the General a stamp of approval from USA. And whatever reservations of Americans about Pakistan, they have none about the head of that state. Indeed, the only gainer in this visit is clearly the general who can now face his democratic critics back home with a renewed vigor. It is instructive to note, how illogical it looks when some quarters, here and abroad, try to equate the democratic polity of India with the uncertain dispensation in Pakistan and call them sister democracies. And then these heads, hopping to foreign lands and people for approval of their candidature and incumbency, presume to talk to the Indian leaders and commit themselves on behalf of a nation that is simply not theirs!

But right now the General there is getting a good talking to by two former Prime Ministers that too on a single day. The issue is the misadventure of Pak army in Kargil with which, says Nawaz Shrief, Musharaf sabotaged a nearly-reached solution of the Indo-Pak dispute. But he is not the only one bowling the general over the with full-cover googlies. His counter part and predecessor in the Pak Prime Ministerial house has dealt a more severe blow to the general saying that she had actually thrown out the Kargil plan six years before it was finally implemented to the precipitate misfortune of Pakistan. That shows that Kargil misadventure was a long standing strategy with the military. And that, long before he came to head the Pak army, Musharraf was peddling it as a brilliant strategy to pull upon an unsuspecting India, telling his political bosses that he would get the Pak flag 'flaying upon Srinagar assembly' in days. One is reminded of the terrorists' boasts in the early days of insurgency in Kashmir that they would be holding the 'next Friday prayers' at the Srinagar masjid.

Now nobody mentions those high flouting claims but it is a fact that few in Pakistan or PoK and fewer still of their sympathizers in here, marked the absurdity of the claim itself. They might have objected to its practicality but never questioned its desirability. Annexation of Kashmir is a desired, planned goal there to which none, not even Benazir, has any objections; it is only the impracticality of the foolhardy plans that made them cringe. Thus when Benazir 'shot down' the Kargil plan of the then Director General of Military Operations Musharraf, it was not the absurd idea that she shot down but the inherent weakness in the strategy. She asked Musharaf about the aftermath of the plan failing not the immorality of its intent. That intent is to capture Kashmir, by hook or crook, through terrorists or army—the 'Tribals' of 1947 or the Taliban of today. It is this thinking that makes the Pak democrats vulnerable to their generals. Had Nawaz and Benazir, and their predecessors, been honest and straight forward, the privileges and prerogatives that army there has come to exercise may never have been theirs. Why, they may never have been ousted, exiled or externed from Pakistan. But that is something they never cognized. And suffered for it.

Yet, the two Prime Minister are giving the general an earful, enough to spoil his 'success' in America. Even though Nawaz Sherif is yet to come out with full details, it is not difficult to piece together the fragments that have been revealed so far. It is also clear who the devil of the piece was, what were the intents and how long they had been nourished and cherished. It is also difficult to take Nawaz's claim that he was unaware of Kargil at its face value. What looks more probable is that though like Benazir he found nothing indecent or indecorous in the Musharraf plan, he could not summon her sense of envisioning its aftermath. Probably, the position of Musharraf as army chief was too strong for Nawaz to discount. Or, may be after a decade-full of peddling it, Musharraf had grown better at selling his pet project. Nawaz thus may have been prevailed upon either through guile or his inability to overrule it but he could not have been 'unaware' of the project when it began to be executed. There are reports of his having visited the 'area' in the hey day of its being 'held' before Indian army went in to reoccupy the Kargil hills and demolished the Pak hopes pegged upon it.

One thing, however, is clear. The General heading Pakistan now was the main mover of Kargil. How his present assertions of honesty are worth would now, naturally, be seen in this back drop. Here the two ex-prime ministers have given the international community, especially the world-cop USA much to mull over. Probably, they only confirm what has been known to whole world for the last half a decade at least, yet it is a confirmation that would only be welcome. More then informing India, America and the world about the true colors of this dictator who is masquerading as one committed to the fight against terrorism, it should benefit the Pakistanis to know how they are being taken for long fancy rides by the army and its generals.

Or is it that the Pak people, like their prime minister, are dismayed only at the undesirable aftermath—the failure—not the grotesqueness of the plan and conception. It is this refusal to come clean on the Pak involvement, intents and interests in Kashmir that is undermining the Pak state and polity. It is this refusal that is ousting elected governments and externing their heads.

***

Uncertain uncertainities galore!.....

Ever since Sartre's 'No Exit' came out the world had been grappling with the perception that uncertainty was certain. That was modernism peeping out through the fraying seams of 'progressivism'. That euphemism for communism had posited that all certainties of the pre-Marxian world were uncertain. From the shape of the earth to the parental role in development everything had come to be unhinged. It was a strange mix of science, quasi-science and non-science that inundated the social, political even personal fields. The modernism spread the covers of progressivism wide, but it had only a brief day. Post-modernism soon took it over. The present day thought says emphatically that every uncertainty is uncertain. And, that is said to be a mantra of hope. By a strange crossing out the two'un's uncertainties are translated into a positivism where everything appears possible. Thus an Israel-Palestine accord is on cards even as every passing minute on the ground negates this fond promise. And, Musharraf is to come to solve the Indo-Pak tangle! Ho! Ho!!

Thinking how the arty-farty movements get into the political calculations, are you? Well, it is because all politics, how so lowly, has to be founded upon an ideological anchor, how so uncertain. Inevitably it is the prevailing ideology that actually drives the politics. The colonial world created Israel. The progressive movement enmeshed it with Egyptian-Syrian blockade. Modernism brought it to Camp David accord of Begin and Sadat. Post-modernism –

remember uncertain in uncertainties – situated a tentatative Palestine upon a doubtful Israel. In its looming uncertainty it believes that centuries of mistrust would just vanish leaving nothing but hope. A fat hope, did you say? Well that is what the muddled thought of our day that understands everything, appreciates everything (and knows nothing?) fondly, fatly believes in,... rather hangs by!

Back home, the creation of Kashmir-dispute was the last-cry of colonial hold getting the better of democratic sense. It was sustained through a surging communist view that every discontent is a "right". Modernism that saw the Berlin wall fall filled the jihads with fervor by turning the facts of history, law and geography fluid Raging uncertainties of post modernism believe that India is right, Musharaf is right, Kashmir is right, even Lahore, Shimla and the UN resolutions,... all are right. And that Musharraf is the right man to solve this tangle. But that definitely is not the only solution that has been let loose upon the people here. Ever heard of a hair brained scheme called Indo-Pak Federation? That is another post-modernism bumbling around. Then, there are parleys at all levels imaginable, proping all sorts of people onto stages, seminars and track-2 exchanges. That is called intellectual initiative. Immaterial squeaking out ineffectives? But then that is what you get when actualities are so hopelessly pooped out.

So the latest hope of the hopelessness is a heedless Mushrraf making headway on Kashmir . The man who refused to look at Vajpaye on his Lahore bus is taking that vehicle forward to a *Shanti-varta*! It is not the irony of the situation but the sheer impossibility of the situation that is striking. But does it strike anyone? No way.

Hope is again getting pregnant like the irrepressible cat! Of course, nine of the ten feline tummy bulgings are false. But how many do know that? It is the air of the age swaying the people away from the realities into imaginary binges of futility. Because everything is uncertain, uncertainties too are uncertain and there can be no certainity about anything. Here any thing is possible, irrespective of the reality, irrespective of the experience, irrespective of the logic and reason. And, one can be a warmonger and a dove of peace at the same time.

But so uncertain are the uncertainties of the time that convictions are simply passing out. Had they been around, the saviors that are coming to negotiating table would have made suiting preparations .That would have called for building trust and amicability, a dilution of stands or at the very least, keeping mum. But here the cart is already set before the horse. The talks are to build confidence. With concessions that nobody can give? For no dialogue among the mistrustful would lead to easy concessions. Can any of the parties here retreat one single inch in principle? Especially when they have built new buttresses into the old obduracies? Here is the Pak High Commissioner going back to the (age-old?) obsession of a referendum, followed by Jaswant Singh stating that Kashmir is an integral-part of India. And together they hope to sit to talk and build confidence!

Nations cannot negotiate to build trust, they build trust to negotiate. India and Pakistan must prepare their people to accept the realities of the situation not lead them to new obstinacies. They cannot negotiate on the strength of the idiosyncrasies of their people but must root the idiocies out to build an atmosphere for talks. Any talking before that is done is bound to be a futile exercise. The talking to, which musharraf did the other day at the *Ulema* meet, could be a step had it not been woefully inadequate if not actually misdirected. He, for example, told the gathering that they are giving Pakistan a bad name by their loud reiteration of the jihad . That is a fact, but the greater fact is that mistrust and antagonism between the two nation stems from the jihad theory. As long as Pakistan retains the mantle of a crusader for Islam the jihad exertions remain logical. And, the mistrust of the neighbour and the nations of the world would increase. Keeping this truth wrapped as Musharraff wants the mullahs to do – and Pakistan succeeded in doing it for the last half a century – is to build distrust not confidence . And mind, this is just one instance.

But then this is the post-modernist age, nay? Here the greatest impossibility is uncertain. And a possibility by implication, while the uncertainties of history get discredited. So, the pundits say that peace may yet follow even from distrust, suspicion and virtual warmongering. Yes, the hopes of this age are incorrigible. They live on fat hopes of uncertainty!

***

Neatly scripted killings, Nay?.....

The key to the Kashmir killings lies in those events of early 1990. Like a time-tested script, the plan and pattern, the program and prosecution of terrorist action, even after ten years, are the same: widen your nets, do your killings and if the heat gets hard shift the blame to the security agencies. With moles and malcontents in almost all agencies it would not be difficult for the instigators of terrorism in Kashmir to put their plans into neat operation. Apparently, it has not been difficult for them. After every killing that had the potential to antagonize the people against the terrorists and show them for the marauders they are, the security setup has acted with alacrity to claim the discredit.

Take that vintage killing of Moulvi Farooq. It was a calculated risk. All terrorist killings appear to be carefully calculated for risks, with strategies and contingencies worked out in detail. Probably, with the point men in place, too. Immediately after the killing its enormity appeared to overwhelm the terrorist out-fits. Nobody owned it (none has owned it to date), yet the followers of the Mir Waiz knew who had done it. The men who followed the funeral procession that evening of May 1990 were sullen. People who wanted revenge and were ready to take on the assassins. Even a fool of a strategist would have capitalized upon that. And, the man at the helm of affairs then was the redoubtable Jagmohan himself. Yet the security forces 'chose' to fire upon the mourners. Seven people were killed. From the 'Moulvi killed by terrorists', it turned into was innocent civilians gunned down by the security forces'.

Ten years, and thousands of deaths, later the terrorists are again up after a brief set back. In a 'routine operation', three dozen Sikhs are lined up and killed. But the operation has turned out to be more than they could chew. As it begins to boomerang upon them nobody owns it up. A brief operation is mounted in far away Mahore in which a whole Gujjar family is eliminated. Apparently, to even the communal scales. But it does not seem to help. Then the Hurriyat gets active and tries to mollify the Sikhs. That too fails to ward off the wide spread condemnation. They try to sing of the 'army' and 'innocents' but it does not help. As if on cue, a procession gets underway in Brakpora. And the security forces that have been patiently fielding the terrorist-volleys for years, get obligingly hyperactive and fire to kill seven civilians in one go. Reminds one of the frequently alleged match-fixing in cricket, doesn't it?

Of course, the blame is quickly shifted to the security agencies. The same thing happened after the Wandhama massacre. Then, it was Doda where the security forces opened fire upon a procession and got the terrorists out of a tight spot. After Sangrampora too, the security forces were 'roped in' to gun down another lot of civilians. So it happened after Prankot. The state Human Rights Commission went on to investigate that killing and is, probably, still doing it. Regularly, after every major massacre which has the potential to bring the terrorists into total disrepute, there is an 'incident' ready wherein the security forces break their restraint and do the needful to get themselves painted black.

Now, processions are not a novelty in the state, nor do the security forces pounce upon them with guns and bullets. In fact, the restraint of security forces has at times bordered on sloth. Yet, after every large-scale massacre that has a devastating psychological impact upon terrorism, the security forces seem to come out to rescues them. Unlike Pakistan, India is not a religious state and the security outfit in the state is neither Hindu nor Sikh. It has been working overtime to gain the goodwill of even the terrorist elements. Over the years security forces have been actively involved in providing healthcare, restoring civic amenities even supplementing education. The restoration/rebuilding, within two days, of a mosque damaged in an anti-terrorist operation in Handwara last week, is only the most recent instance of it. Yet, Brakporas recur, regularly, as if on cue—perfect to the script, apt and well-timed—to bail the terrorists out. How?

Yes, how do the security agencies that normally work with extra caution, 'lose' their legendary restraint just when the terrorists are getting roundly condemned? How come the security forces, that work hard for every ounce of goodwill, even to the extent of losing their men, throw it all to winds exactly when their esteem is highest? Notwithstanding the vicious Pak propaganda, the people of the state know who the marauders are and how the security agencies conduct themselves. Even in the hey day of militancy in early nineties, it was the army, and not the so called jehadis, who the people in the valley depended upon for security and safety. Would that force indulge in a suicidal firing, at one of the most sensitive times, and gain a needed breather for the insurgency?

Already, no less a person than the CM he has castigated the police for 'firing upon a peaceful procession'. The same police that did not even obstruct the thousands who defied curfew in Jammu two weeks ago; the same police which has never fired upon unruly mobs in Kashmir in the decade-long militancy; the same police which appears almost protective of the militants in their caution. The same police goes berserk, and provides easy fodder for the Pak propaganda machinery as well as the apologists for militants. And, grants the cornered terrorists unearned breathers, besides washing the blood off their sleeves. How come? Pray who scripts these neat manipulations, to get the state into deeper mires of terrorism?

***

A Full... too full, a year!.....

We live by deeds not by years, said that old proverb. But it certainly did not have the 'deeds', the first year of the first century of the third millennium of the Christian Era did during its span, in mind. One may not call the year's doings misdeeds for it is too weak a word to denote all the havoc it wrecked upon the peoples of the world. Yet the year that is gone by did some real 'deeds' and there too one is constrained to search for a more apt phrase to describe the clarity it has brought to the world in its perceptions, the veils it has torn and the awareness it has brought to the world about the dangers it may face. Deeds or no deeds, one thing is clear that the year 2001 was a full year. The events that were crammed into it, rather a third of it, may have easily filled a decade of years. And, one can be reasonably sure that the impact of this year would spill over many more years to come.

The years that would come may 'scarce believe that such a' year did actually come to pass, but then the shadow would loom and convince all that this indeed was the year that changed the world for a certainty. The world may forget, the people may soon be back to their cunning games if they are not already there, but the changes that the year has wrought would long be felt in their import and implications. Though the first year of the new millennium began as just any other of the previous years, the coming years would not be the same because this one has been so vastly different. At no time previous to it had the havoc-some propensities of singular men been appreciated. There had been Hitlers and Mussolinis of course, but half a century believed that the world had gone too far ahead for the recurrence of these aberrations of humanity. Nobody ever thought that a single man would come to embody so much evil that the whole world would have to gear up against him.

In a way the world had grown too proud of its enlightenment and egalitarianism. The world believed that it had left the medieval madnesses behind and grown to be a mature, rational place to live in. It thought only in terms of reasons and deprivations. Though for some time an appreciation has been gaining ground that the criminals may not all be abnormal psychologies, the fact had not rung in deep. The complacency of the world that it could treat all manias out was shattered, as all arrogances are destined to be. The paradigms of security, the calculations of distance, the assurances of prowess, all lie in a heap of molten metal and glass in the midst of most secure places in the world. The most incredulous aspect was not that it was done, but the fact it was done by a rag-tag of an outfit that could not eat well, could not dress itself... which could not even show a modicum of resistance! Yet that ramshackle thing rocked the world to its roots most violently, shaking it out of its stupor.

But, probably, that is not the most striking aspect of the whole thing. The surpassing feature of it all was that a human tragedy as mindless as the WTC attack could evoke mirth in some quarters and peoples of this globe. Yet it actually did cause celebration at places. And, here we meet another more remarkable facet. Reasonable men and women, scholars and politicians, legions of ...shall we say... apologists and prevaricators, found whole justifications, and founded theories of cause-and-effect in the dastardly events. If this is what the egalitarianism of a near-century, the rationality of an educated, enlightened generation has taught us, there is a clear lesson that that effort has been a wastage. It is certainly a positive facet that the world without much effort did coalesce together to fight terrorism out of the world. That by itself would change the whole global perspective for all times to come.

Yet, for a time, a full month, the world kept calculating the possible reaction and impact. It even had the indecency of singing paeans to the greatest terrorist of all time. Subtle eulogies were filled between the media reports, even sometimes, someplace, voiced openly. One shudders to think what would have been the result if that attack had been mounted on any other country, say India or France, instead of the sole superpower of the world. Or, if the retaliation had failed to dislodge bin Laden and his mentor Omer from the perches in the barren Afghan hills. Today pipa may be singing on the bush and much if not all may be well with the world, because bin Laden is running around for a place to hide, but if it had not turned out so well, the consequences for the world would have been horrible. It would have been a terror stricken world running for cover, while a scraggy beard punctuated its fatwas with orders for bombings. And, as the subtle eulogies and justifications showed, there would be any number of scholarships citing history and sociology, law and anthropologies, not to speak subtleties of theology, to rationalize those dictates.

That is the reason why there can be no compromise on the philosophies of Error... why the world must play no games here. Why the theories seeking to justify terrorism should be given no quarter by this world. And why, the world must always be on guard against the forces and ideologies that sanction or support, subtly or slyly, inhuman acts. And, never promote them or pamper their perpetrators.

Terrorism is unacceptable.....

Every animal has a 'territorial' jurisdiction in which it won't accept an intruder. Every nation has an area delineated as its own upon which it won't allow any infringement. So doth a family have a defined circle within which it does not tolerate any trespass? Even the people living in a commune have a nook, a cupboard which they hold all to themselves and never suffer others rummaging in there. That private sphere is the minimal rooming requirement for a living thing to operate. Here the humans and the animals are almost indistinguishable quality-wise, any difference there being only of quantity like the amount of land and areas held, the force with which it is protected etc. And, there the animals and humans part ways. If the former is the animal part of the human being, the social part of the definition of a human as a social animal requires that the humans heed the concerns of the other humans, the society around and act in accordance with the socializing factors and requisites.

While the animals snarl and bare their teeth, the humans talk. While the animals bark and roar, humans protest. While the animals grab by force of fang and claw, the humans have law to detail the acceptable and unacceptable rights, the permitted force to be used and other measures available for redress. That is the human mode of doing what the animals do on their own, after their own fashions day after day in the jungle. Nor have the humans landed there in one big leap. They too snarled and growled, leaped upon one another's limbs and tore them apart to establish their sway. As Charles

Darwin detailed with fact and figures, the instincts of man evolved from the animal growls and scowls and their expression too is thinly veiled imitation of the animal poses. Then, the man passed out of the animal mode. He began to get civilized. He learned the value of brotherhood, the social value of communal living and began to enlarge the instincts that yielded what is called the milk of human kindness.

The civilizing of the human animal did not come about easily or without the barbaric decimation of whole races of humans. Two centuries after Buddha, Ashoka continued to wage war and massacre people till one massacre taught him to desist. Other marauding hordes kept stalking the human beings into the medieval times. Nor are the Mahmood Gaznavi's forays into India or the Chengez's sack of Baghdad the last of these brutish examples. We have people right in the twentieth century believing that rights, equality and power flow from the barrels of guns. Yet this last century was learning and improving. Today the world does not easily countenance whimsical alterations of the states and their standings. There may be a Saddam somewhere who believes that he can overrun adjacent territories, or a bin Laden elsewhere who believes that this world is ripe for jihad but the humanity at large has transcended that boorish stage. And those who may still be nursing anachronistic fixes have to accept that reality.

The world today is at a stage where the idea of killing even a criminal in an anathema. There are movements afoot in all the countries that are seeking to ban the death penalty out of the legal system. Human life is sacrosanct. Not because we cannot abolish death, but simply because violence is recognized as a brutish instinct that the civilized ones must get rid of. Violence, as Gandhi taught, breeds violence. Every human being has a right to be protected from violence. Being human is about dialogue and dissent, the right of all to have their say and be heard with patience. That is the premise of democracy. Democracy may not be the best of systems that man could have devised to register this 'say' and 'hearing' but it is the best we have at the moment and till a better one comes along we have to live with it. Its greatest merit is to allow the most comprehensive listing of the inclinations and proclivities. It also abolishes the autocracy, aristocracy and other arbitrary systems. It says an emphatic NO to the violence and might, which the animals in the jungle employ to 'say' their things.

Terrorism is a reiteration of the law of the jungle. It takes humans back to the medieval and ancient eras when the wielder of the sword was the King, and man was subject to his whim. Humans may not have become shadows of ahimsaic Gandhi, but they certainly have come to abhor violence. Today the justices all over the world are busy describing what can be construed as violence in thought and banning it out of the social setups. Humans have left the brute despoiler of life and rights behind them. Whatever the 'cause', whatever the 'grievance', terrorism as a means is simply not available now. There may be people who still find this world much imbalanced, there may be denials too, but the use of terrorism is not justified. Terrorism is vile because it negates its very premise. Violence and killing cannot lead to peace. It may have taken the world millennia to discover the Indian stress on nonviolence but at last the world is coming there. It may be two thousand years but at long last his world has come to see what Ashoka saw on the battlefields of Kalinga. It may be half a century but the world is beginning to see why the modern apostle of *ahimsa* exhorted Indians to be nonviolent in their struggle. The least we can do is update the parameters of our thinking.

***

Extra-national loyalties.....

The political philosophy of our day is still grappling with the question of nationalism. The old-world notion of a nation being right whether rational, irrational or blissfully dismissive of all reasons, is not favoured any longer. But the status of nationalism as an accepted political entity stands. The consensus recognizes culture and ethos as the legitimate basis for that nationalism, though the jury is still out on how much emphasis to lay there. It has, however, emphatically rejected loyalties out of it. The world may be progressing toward globalism where humanism, plain and unfettered, would hold sway, but it has not yet reached there. Though the world certainly thinks in the larger perspective, we still have Falklands and Grenada, the African nations struggling to find a foothold for their national assertions in tribal identities and Russo, Chineese (-Indian?) equations fumbling to change the unipoloarity of the world and on the top of it all the single superpower hedging left and right to hold its hegemony.

Nationalism is here to stay for quite some time and interests, perspectives and equations would continue to be reckoned in terms of nationalism. That nationalism is getting refined, with content replacing the bigotry and culture determining the affiliation, with emphasis on law, reason and rationality. The acceptance of human concerns as primary to any dispensation shows that universalism remains a worthy goal. But none of this approves subverting the national identity for the sake of some extra-national concern. If anything, there is a general abhorrence of every type of proselytisation whether it is ideological or religious. All over the world, commitments to anything except a plain pursuit of truth in the most open manner are frowned upon. As a result whole nations and people are discovering frailties and failings of theirs, admitting them, apologizing if necessary and generally setting the record straight.

Yet forces and agencies in India are still at work carving out fields, distorting facts and pushing forth perspectives with 'agendas' and 'crusades' written all over them. It is here that communists and Islamists cannot escape blame. Neither of them seemingly has much investment in the culture and ethos of this land, which alone is recognized today as the legitimate basis of loyalty. Both have been happily trifling it. While one refuses to see anything local not even the climate, the other is hell-bent on distorting every Indian claim in pursuit of their own extra-national allegiances. This makes, an apparently Indian, SIMI a ready tool of mechanizations of ISI. Even as innocuous a movement as *Deendar Anjuman* becomes a high subverter of Indian ethos of tolerance for the same considerations. That has also made it easy for countless 'jihadi' outfits from Bin Laden downwards to find here easy fodder for its fundamentalist missions.

Just as the stake in Arab supra-nationalism cannot have much sympathy for the local ethos here, the votaries of communist ideology cannot empathise with the currents of Indian culture. They roundly debunk them. It is remarkable how they have caught at the stray flawed straws of Indian history and built whole edifices around them to house their pet ideologies. Thus the ancient Indian tradition of Charvaka was magnified by one philosopher of the ideology to build a thesis that Indian culture was materialist in its origins. It was so, like most of the things in that antiquity but it does not prove that the high Upanishadic tradition never existed, or that Shankara's Advaita, which is the most developed of spiritual formulations, did not sway India. Just as the Hegelian roots of Marx do not prove that communism is an esotericism. But this is not recognized; the total picture and full conclusions are never arrived at, because the aim here is to buttress the ideology not to seek answers.

So it is with history. All over the world the theory of Aryan ingress ('invasion' is the word 'our' historians prefer!) into India and other myths associated with Aryan origins are under high disrepute. A seminar at southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, in September 1998, unequivocally concluded that there was no proof to uphold the theory, yet the Indian professors of history, all under high leftist influence, continue to interpret Indian history even society in terms of the ...yes, 'invasion' theory. The chronology imposed by the British (they too had similar Extra-Indian loyalties, remember) upon the ancient Indian history is also being criticized every where except in India because here the history, sociology everything is in the 'occupation' of the leftists or ones oriented towards them. And, their agendas are supported by these misinterpretations. The whole Indian *'Itihas'* developed by these leanings has become propaganda by Indians against India. The last millennium, which is a period of high discord, oppression and pillaging of Indian goods, heritages and legacies, is presented as the 'flowering' of Indians culture while the earlier centuries that did found and foster the culture that withstood this heavy onslaught, comes thorough as the period of high deprivations. Even Aurangzeb gets a good word in their books, but poor India is beaten blue with slanted fact and motivated fiction. All to promote extra-national loyalties.

***

They kill for their sport.....

When the world had still not built huts nor sown corn, when the men and women went about clad in nothing and ate hunted meat, when man were more an animal than a social being, he cried on seeing a fellow human bleed. Then the world moved to settled life; historians called them barbarians for they lived in cultured camaraderie, feeling and caring for one another. And then came civilization and legitimized spilling people's blood; some did it to please gods, but most killed to please mortals, their Kings and feudal lords. Still late came light, and swept away all remnants of lurking feeling out. Man emerged as a proposition: economists called him a market-ball, bouncing up and down with the price of paddy; science called him an organism at par with the snail and earth worm; both proved that there was no soul so the feeling for fellow beings. Man was out in the cold, 'exposed' as Plato would say.

Without a soul, a man is game. For centuries man got killed in the name of Kingships; for a near century he has been killed in the name of rights and liberty. Those that killed in hundreds became Rajas and nabobs; those as could manage it in thousands became Rajadhirajas, the king of Kings but the British, showed that there was nothing superlative about them. That left us rajas and nabobs and other of kingly species. Killing being in their blood, the blood that sees no killing for a length of time gets sluggish and forgets to flow. So these lineages must kill to keep their blood coursing. If you got the wrong impressions that feudal lords were passe, gone into the debris of history, these passions would serve to remind you that you are in the wrong. The fiefdoms are there, vast and sprawling and so are serfs doing their servitor stints, though these retainers are now called government servants. Ours, you see, is also an age of humor!

Should it then, keeping all the physiological, sociological and temperamental factors in view, occasion any surprise that the restricted nabobs were on a shooting spree in the Kashmir wetlands the other week, killing birds. It saves men, this killing of birds, doesn't it. And then birds like men are bipeds standing on two legs; like men they soar into fancies of presumed invincibility and like men they fall once their bubbles are pricked. Another time, another place, these princes would've been gaily killing men for their sport. Thankfully, they haven't trained their guns on the men around. Why, didn't the militants amply prove that there is value in killing—you could kill for sport and get crowned! And didn't the rightful representatives of democratic polity, accompany the princes to keep a firsthand watch, lest they kill that extra bird, which would have spelled doom for the ecological balance. Now if these ministers too, fired those few shots, we can be pretty sure that they did it to bring down the population whose control is our national priority? Democracy, you see, has all answers!

And then the killer instinct (and presumably practice, too) is an essential qualification for any one aspiring to lead this nation. Yes, no question about it... it comes straight from the mouth of as high a horse as A.V. Burdan of lofty left. Now, when leftists tell their non-leftist friends a thing or two, about killings and killer instincts they have got to listen or risk the leftists' well-known penchant for a teaching killing or two. Examples proving this penchant come not only from the rural images of Andhra or Bihar, but all around; Pol

Pot, after all was a leftist... so is Huen Sen... and of the same ilk is Kabila of the Zairean nation!

Indeed, it is the killing and killer instincts that make the world go around in rounds. From Saddam to Clinton to Winnie ex-Mandela, killing is the passion of the winning folks. Gujral, the soft intellectual lost because he had none of this win-some quality, while octogenarian E.M.S. Namboodiripad is getting a virile, new-fame for tearing as solid a reputation as that of Arundati Roy. Why, even the small goddesses of fair causes, owes their success to surges of this quality instinct. Behold delicate Maneka mouthing easy expletives. Or, take the damsels of Women's Lib, ready to take on the most formidable of opponents. Yes, it is venom and vituperation, killers and killing instincts that matter and make the mare called world go trumping around. Killing is a legitimate binge and the birds are worth only a bullet or two. For, those that are born to be killed shall get killed. If not a Patoudi, nor a Patiala, or a novae nabob, a militant will do it. It is a sport, you see!

***

Us, US, Israel and Terrorists!.....

William Safire is a respected columnist of the New York Times. This Monday his column for the paper was a seven hundred word teta-tete of Ariel Sharon over phone with a supporter of his in which he explained the need for a hard retaliation by Israel to the Palestinian terrorists attacks on Israel. It was all about the Israeli 'determination' and the need for it. Of course, America has already defended the Israeli bombing of Palestine areas saying that every country has the right to defend itself. That is American policy, a political statement. And, here we have a most respected columnist putting it across to the readers. "We are at life-and-death struggle and we would never compromise under pressure", he adds to which Safire then adds his own sympathetic vibes. "I will ask the cabinet to take hard decision" asserts he and strikes empathic waves all around. It is Israel or Arafat concludes Sharon and that is what Safire chooses to call column.

Of course, the next day Sharon went to pound the Palestine areas a la American in Afghanistan. There are neither confusions there, nor any ambiguities about the need to act tough when the life and liberty of citizens is threatened. About the time Safire's column appeared, a debate was being held in new Delhi where a former Prime Minister of the country accepted that terrorism was a threat to the civil society, but rejected the instrument the government in office thinks it needs to fight it viz. POTO. How that threat to the civil society, was to be fought was probably not the former PM's worry. The column following Safire's 'Israel or Arafat' has a poignant point that should sink into the minds of the liberal brigade in this country that is not appreciative of appropriate measures needed to tackle the menace of terrorism, though they do see it as a serious threat. The columnist is Thomas A Friedman and the title is tellingly called 'Rights in a real world'. Says he:

"With bin Laden and al Qaida we are up against radical evil-people who not only want to destroy us but are perfectly ready to destroy themselves as well". Now the same bin Laden is threatening the civil society in India and is as much a 'radical evil' here as he is elsewhere. The distinguished columnist there is actually advocating the need to understand the hard laws, the US defense secretary has enforced to comebat terrorism. He reasons that the crime of terrorism is a different crime. Its premises and suppositions are different from those of a common crime and hence it cannot be fought with the common apparatuses that are designed to counter ordinary criminals. It is relevant to relate the distinction he makes between the two:

"At some level our legal system depends on certain shared values and assumptions between accusers and accused. But those simply do not apply in this case. When we were at war with the Soviet Union, we saw the world differently, but there were still certain basic human norms that the two sides accepted." He goes on to say that it is not so with terrorists. They do not respect those shared values. They do not have the expectations that motivate ordinary criminals. They are not bound by the values and desires that matter with the ordinary criminal. Hence the ordinary laws fail to help there. In the conflict with the Russians, says the columnist, there was a shared perception of life and perspectives. The Russians too wanted what the men and women in the US revered. And hence they played according to the rules that the normal laws are based upon. Not so the terrorist. Terrorism is based on hate, exceeding overwhelming hate. A hate that despises all the civilized proclamations.

Friedman takes note of the fact that most of the terrorists involved in the WTC attack hailed from well-to-do families, and had families, brothers and sisters. But unlike the Indian confusions he does not see it as an indication that there are hidden reasons there. He concludes that it shows hate, exceeding hate for the system of liberties and the life we call civilized life. "What does that say?" he asks and answers, "It says they hate us more than they love their own families. As the Israeli author Ari Shavit noted, they hate us and would wipe us away. The whole life has been turned into one obsessive hate that would stop at nothing to wreck the target of that hate. Safire, speaking of Palestinians, has another relevant line: "They are all together now, acting to carry out the strategy of terror. Arafat provides them all the help and support and cover and money." Referring to international interference in such cases he adds: No nation or international group can be an honest broker between a democracy under attack and a terrorist coalition on the march. The time for such misguided U.S "evenhandedness" is long past.

There are no ambiguities there. They are clear that terrorism is to be wiped out, thoroughly, to save the civil society. It needs all the paraphernalia that civilization can put together. Today an increasing number of Indians is wondering what is preventing India and Indians from showing a similar clarity of aims and objectives and executions. Shouldn't the right activists here answer their compatriorts?

***

Poto and the USA Patroit Act.....

Out here in India you would call this caption a silly word-play and laugh at it, looking for a patting glance of appreciation all around. And thereby, you 'prove' that securing India is a silly game, that no laws are needed here, no rifles either. And if that binge of liberal intellectualism takes a higher fight you may even say that India itself is not needed, and look to other mentors, in grammar and language, this time to applaud your clever pun. After you have 'proved' that, you may add further 'points' to confirm your stand and say that there are minorities here, that there are TV channels here, that there are reporters around, who all need to be 'protected' against any remote, theoretical, hypothetical, even imaginary, inconvenience that may be caused by any provision of law that seeks to accomplish prevention of terrorism. You would cite cases and laws, cite examples from society and ethics and buttress your case, with invocations in and out of context, that any attempt to prevent attacks on this society is not what the lord God has ordained.

If you are the die-hard liberalist... who rule this nation and its notions by remote control then, you would be happy at that performance at piffling India, Indians and their concerns and would also believe that you are not included in there—neither in the threat perception nor in the high definition of Indians as bumbling fools at large you were referring to... so much the better for you. For, soon you the liberal intellectual of India would be haranguing the Indian government and law-makers for not enacting 'comprehensive legislation' as they have in the lands like USA! Sure the people of India would soon come to know this open ***bandal baazi*** of the 'right activist' of this land, but by then irreparable damage would have been caused to the nation. Yet does anyone care here? Anyone of those liberal opinion makers who disparage POTO as the very evil incarnate but forget to speak of the USA PATRIOT Act 2001.

The two Acts against terrorism came, at about the same time last week. But, with a crucial difference. The American Congress brought the act with overwhelming support to the president's table in a record time while the Indian opinion masters are still inspecting POTO, with a hand lens, to read injustices and threats to liberty, media and minorities into it. Accordingly the American Act is clear, comprehensive and direct. Even the title is chosen to state unambiguously that American patriotism is being anti-terrorist: uniting and strengthening of America (USA) by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (PATRIOT), Act 2001. There is no confusion there, no doubts over the need for harsh laws to protect the nation. No confounding of terrorism is to be fought out there. No it is not world terrorism—they do not care two hoots about the world there. It is plain annihilation of America's enemies and that is that.

Accordingly, US PATRIOT Act 2001 is a hefty 131 page document filled with bold writing that effectively contains about ten POTOs between its covers; it is more comprehensive than the Indian Ordinance, more stringent, more 'crippling' as the critics here would have said (if it had been an act enforced in India). The Act gives the state and its officers, in police and secret services, both national and international, extensive powers of surveillance, eavesdropping, intrusion, interference and what not. It covers common offences, the electronic offences, financial offences and others. One clause specifies that if any part of the Act 'is constructed as invalid' under any law, maximum benefit of construction shall be given so that the law is not invalidated on that count, and if any provision is found 'utterly invalid' then only that bit shall be questioned without affecting rest of the statute in any way. And then the Act goes on to list everything on the face of this earth and gives its enforcement agencies, or people fighting terrorism against America, limitless powers over it if, when and where needed by them.

The greatest criticism of POTO (Prevention Of Terrorism Ordinance) here has been over the clause requiring all Indian people to divulge any information they happen to have about terrorists. That is the starting point of the PATRIOT Act. It goes on to impose much greater 'duties' upon the people and media and any other person who may happen to have the information. It takes surveillance to heights that no Indian ordinance-drafter may ever dream of. It roundly dismisses any and every excuse that the terrorists and their harbourers may invent. Without, of course, any 'rightists' nagging it! Some people have said, that 'it may lead to rights abuses' but that objection has been very muted... very hesitant. Because they know that their country is above everything; it is above any inconvenience, any minor bother, any small discomfort. Of course, they cannot envisage anybody using the excuse of rights to carry on anti-national activities of any sort. Such travesties are only expected in India and must be protected, too!

Nationalism is not a plaything there. It is a living creed. Nobody can, nobody must, say or do, anything against the nation. Any hint of anti-nationalism is a mighty offence there. A *mullah* calling for jihad against America would have been hanged without a trial a la Taliban's treatment of Haq. And no question would be asked. That is why they call their anti-terrorist act USA PATRIOT Act. And, would enforce it. Ruthlessly, you may be sure. And there would be violations in that. Mighty violations. Already the foreign nationals are being hauled up to show their American credentials. Everybody who even thought of a ***mubarak-bad*** on the 11th of September is behind the bars. And rightly so. Anti-nationals have no right to live in any nation, whether it is India or USA. And USA means it. Extraterritorial loyalties are not allowed there. Nor, any extra-national consideration. That is the big difference between POTO and USA PATRIOT Act. The difference of a nation and a non-nation? Mull over that, would you?

***

The cabinet-bit in the KP mouth.....

Not that the community of Kashmiri pandits is raring for rebellion and needs immediate reigning in. The community, for everybody else's good, is finely divided into factions by the score. It is in a self-emasculation mode. Its scions are busy... too busy, currying favours here, cooking foibles there, to merit much attention from the powers that be. In fact, with its brimful of knowledge and understanding, it is effectively shooing away every body from coming anywhere near its woes. Again with the loads of the same knowledge and understanding packed in there, the community is fending for itself – dividedly, separately. Often against its own interests, in a shocking nonchalance .They have been living for a decade now as a fringe nuisance, as a people who simply don't seem to matter, instead of being recognized as a people gravely wronged by the state and their fellow people.

What if the community has actually been bereft of all rights bestowed by the democracy's scheme? What if they are neither citizens, nor non-citizens, neither something nor nothing, neither noticed nor un-noticed in their own land, state and government? What, if they have not even got enumerated in the recently concluded national census? Are not they unaware of themselves, un-noticed of the nation in the true exemplification of the supreme principle of detachment? Aren't they living a borrowed niche, begging for an existence to which they are entitled by the law of the land? Indeed, so busy are they looking for the petty cares that the larger picture is just not registered. And, of course, that suits everybody fine.

Of course, they are a luckless reminder that all is not well with this state. But not so long ago even that plight was misunderstood. Ere the ceasefire, their continued exile was invariably greeted with apathy bordering on irritation. Surprised angels from the lull-full Eden actually queried why they were not returning! And, others threw up their hands in helpless incomprehension. All the time they had 'representatives' in the house and cabinet, but never once did the KP representative in the legislature and the almighty cabinets stand up and state the truth of their eviction, much less raise the demand for their rehabilitation and succor on their own behalf.

But why would they? After all those august representatives although pledged to the community, are lofted to their positions by the dint of their own ministrations. Didn't they owe their representative status to the goodwill and *meharbanis* of their mentors and not the endorsement of the members of their community ? So while one kept re-laying fences of sundry *Astans* and *ziarats*, the other paid his debts by effectively articulating the party position on issues from the supposed reluctance of migrants to return to valley to the restoration of the state autonomy. Authoring surreptitiously the sinister regional autonomy report too, some would say. Good *namak khauri* that nice restitution of obligations but why drag the poor KPs into it?

On the face of it the practice appears as the ultimate triumph of the democracy in that a party, which is not obliged to include other sections of populace in its decision-making, takes in members from those sections. Ostensibly they are there to influence the decision makers in the interest of the community or the minor groups who may actually have opposed them at polls. Lofty objectives that. But to be of any value the people so taken in should in truth be representatives of those sections, who would stand for their interests, articulate their concerns, fight for their causes. Other wise the practice becomes a subversion of the principles and instead of the ideal serves to bludgeon a reluctant people into supporting a cause they abhor. It is mainly an appearance that cannot but be damaging to the peoples concerned.

And, it is all to good of the wily politicians and scheming party. The party gets credit for a magnanimity that just isn't there. It gets a suitable face to tout tricky policies which, would be seen in their true tone, that in the mouth of others. But what is most important, it ends up breaking the voice of that people by creating illlegimate points of influence in that old colonial tradition when the British took a sadistic pleasure in driving divisive wedges into the body populace of India. That is what has been aimed and achieved with the sweet-sounding representations of the KP's in successive cabinets over the last quarter century.

Again, today the search is on for a suitable bit to be put in the mouth of the community for a good straddling for the powers that be so that they can easily ride over the cares, concerns and causes of this section of people. You may well ask, if the powers need to do it; whether majority rulers need to ride rough shod over a miniscule minority? Does the money-bag need to gather every stray penny in his purse? Or, does an autocrat need to silence every dissenting voice? No they do not, but end up doing it all time.With bridle, bit and reins. Nay?

***

Maneauvering the Pandits nigh.....

Till the terrorism recently bared its cruel fangs in and outside India, Kashmir was getting all 'normal'. Everything seemed to have been accomplished and the only remaining task was to take the Kashmiri Hindus back to the valley. There after, all would have been hanky-dory for the mandarins who specialize in meandering around the problems of this state without taking them to any solution. Of course, the WTC attacks had not taken place when Farooq Abdullah made his belated tours of the camps where the displaced of this state live out their unrecognized, unnoticed exile from the valley of Kashmir. The attack on the legislature complex in the Srinagar was still a month away. All appeared 'normal' to the eyes looking out on the state from the safety of the security cordons and the state was anxious to 'bring home' the 'migrants'. Of course, the state has not realized even after more than a decade of their exile, that they were evicted out of their homes on the pain of certain death.

That it was the threat of the terrorist not the lure of jobs or a taste for the hot tropical sun that caused the Kashmir minority to leave their ancestral places and seek refuge in places that, then, were safe and free from the menace of terrorism. Of course it was not called 'terrorism' then. It was not recognised that this force had streaks that transcended every suggestion of civilized co-existence, that it stood for an exclusivety, that it took pride in decimating every shade of a differing inclination or calling. The high priests of the liberalism were busy, then, searching for the 'social' and 'economic' causes of the insurgency. Even well-meaning people were putting forth theses of mis-governance and mal-administration even malnutrition to explain the burst of violence in the peace-loving valley. Others actually posited usurpation by this very persecuted segment of the population ,of Kashmir as the cause of upsurge of terrorism there .They did not even recognize it as an insurgency them, much less call it the terrorism that it was.

The terrorists were 'misled youths' and the support of others for their activities was only an 'expression of anger' for what were then called 'legitimate grievances' of the people . They had to be 'won over' into the mainstream with ruses and had to be 'rehabilitated'. But the Kashmir minority, which left everything behind save their bare bodies, knew better. They has seen the Bitas and Latrams and Sheikhs and Maliks of 'struggle' for the ruthless marauders they were. They had seen them pontificating proudly on their 'motivations' and 'missions'. They had heard whence their inspiration came and had seen how they were going about giving effect to their visions and ideas. They were lucky to leave with less damage to their body and soul than others had suffered in an earlier working of that very vision and wont.

But their realization was not shared by others. People persisted in their own readings of the situation unfolding in Kashmir. Thus insistence upon reading personal prejudices into the events of Kashmir continued over long years. Probably, there still are men around who would misread the terrorism in Kashmir, though after the WTC that tribe has definitely shrunken in size. But Farooq came to camps before the truth had been told over America. The Pandits were still the 'last unfinished task' that had to be 'completed' before the house that had 'put the state back on the rails' was dissolved.

And a new ruse was laid to lure the 'migrants' back to the valley, which they were supposed to 'have left' on their own. Neither the rising militancy nor the strong negative indicators on ground were any good in goading the governance of this state into a reality check.

That reality has now burst upon the state in a telling fashion. The marauders are everywhere, terrorism is well entrenched again and the state is in a shock. The façade of normalcy has been blown to bits and not on the gates of the legislative complex, alone. But there is little indication that the state government has come to any appreciation of the problem of 'migrants'. Much as they may be in need of employments, much as they may be hounded by their worsening economic conditions, much as the frustration in the youth of the community may be touching its lowest point... this is not the reason, which saw them out of their homes and hearths. It was high insecurity, the total failure of the state to provide any safety to its vulnerable minority. It was the practical inability to live in a situation where the constitutional guarantees did not work. That status remains unchanged, if not changed to a still worse condition. The marauders are roaming more freely than ever, the state machinery is as helpless as it was, the atmosphere is as terror-laden as it ever was.

That is not a state where anybody can be free to live, to work, to carry on the commerce of life. It would be unethical to maneuvere a community in bad straits with the lure of jobs into a 'technical return'. That is what the 'promise of jobs' the CM made connotes and has caused the Pandits to line up in long queues to fill in the requisite forms. Of course, the Pandits stand in need of jobs. The state over the past five years has recruited a hundred and twenty thousand employees mostly in the district cadre posts, which have by-passed the 'migrants'. The migrants have seen about five thousand of their employed retire during these years. Those jobs too have been filled. They have a deserved share in this cake, which needs be restored to them. But it is just not fair to use this right as a tool to exploit them in foisting a technical return upon the community whose exile had little to do with the economic reasons.

***

KP's — a hierarchy of issue.....

Lamenting their martyrs in silence yesterday, Kashmir Pandits passed into the thirteenth year of their exile, in their own nation and state. Just as India's cries against terrorism were ignored by the wide world till this week's terrorist strike on America, the plight of the ethnic Hindus of Kashmir and their eviction from their land has gone largely unappreciated. Probably, it takes a close encounter to understand the circumstances that others have gone through. That situation has definitely led to an actual underestimation of the tragedy this people of our nation was forced through. Even today, after twelve long years of the state being menaced by the terrorism, one meets an occasional passenger in a Delhi-bound train who is ready to swear that all is well with the state saying. " I have just returned from Mata's durbar and all is well there". There are many people who would assert that the displaced of Kashmir 'have no problems', possibly may say 'they have no cause'. Yet, they are faced with problems of enormous gravity.

The tattered tents have given way to cloistered one-room tenements into which whole families are crumpled. Even these are available to only a fraction of the migrant people with the majority being forced to live in rented accommodation, in a city where the rates are only going up. They have been practically denied their share in the state services even as the government boasts of having recruited over a lakh of people during the past five years. The two thousand and odd rupees of relief given to families which have no source of income, can by no stretch of imagination be deemed sufficient for a family. The health care and education facilities are skeletal and even these are not working properly. Their share in the state amenities and facilities is simply denied to them. Surveys tell of a negative growth rate in the community, which threatens to achieve the decimation of this ethnicity that the militants failed to effect. For the last twelve years they have gone without any democratic rights being allowed them. On the top of it they are driven with dissensions with parties, outfits and splinter groups, some of them representing divisions as crass as camp and non-camp migrants.

This plethora of problems presents confusion in articulation as well as understanding of the issues facing the displaced Hindus of Kashmir. Thus relief, which provides the main sustenance for them, is a raging issue voiced in forum after forum. But the enhancement of relief would not remove all the problems of the migrants. The migrants have been deservedly demanding compensation of their gutted properties on the same basis on which it has been granted to the other similarly affected people in the valley. Again, would acceptance of the demand by government be the end of migrants' woes? An estimated 70,000 youth of the community are faced with practical unemployement and have been suffering in frustration for the last several years. Nor is any prospect of their getting a bit of the state cake evident. These problems, immediate and pressing as they are, need be tackled in the earnest. But would that end the problem of the migrants?

There is a feeling in the migrant community and also among their well-wishers that their issues would be aired better with a more united front of their organizations. It may or may not help. Given the Machiavellian approach of our government who believe that solving peoples' problems means dividing them and buying sections out with personal benefits and gifts, that sort of 'united face' may actually act to the detriment of the interests of the displaced people. Even if a united front were presented would it be the end of their problems? No, that would solve only the organizational problems. Back in Kashmir they did not have an organization. Need for better organization and articulation is a problem arisen out of the problem of the exile, which is the basic problem. Similarly the problem of relief, employments, provision of accommodation and facilities, though very acute problems in themselves. are problems that have arisen from the basic fact of their eviction from their homes.

These are secondary problems... humanitarian problems that have moved even nongovernmental agencies and conscientious citizens who at various times have come forward to try to mitigate them. Solving them is a natural duty of the government. Every self-respecting government would see that the immediate problems of the people are addressed. The package that the Farooq government speaks of to 'rehabilitate' the migrants only addresses this secondary problem arisen from the fact of migration. But the state government as well as the one at center appears to be laboring under the misconception that addressing the secondary problems is the 'solution to the issues' of the displaced people. Like all people in the state the migrants have a right to the employment and facilities the state provides. They have a right to relief because the state failed to protect them in their homes. Their plight demands that the government come to their aid in a fitting manner. But relief is not the primary issue.

The primary issue is their right to live in their homes, which the state failed to safeguard. It is the issue of their identity and being, their democratic right of protection against threat to life, limb and property. The right to live in their homes with dignity and composure. The state failed to ensure that. That inability of the government caused the migration. Return of the migrants can be possible if that basic right can be ensured. The state that is well nigh scared to move with its machinery in the valley, where police parties with half a dozen klashnikovs meekly lay their arms down, cannot assure the protection of that right. That is the primary issue the migrants face. It must be attended to before any talk of return can fructify. And, it certainly would not help to confuse the issues arisen consequent to the of the problem with the problem itself, as this government is trying to do.

****

KP's — *Chalo Bhulava Aya Hai!!........*

It... the land, the city we are gong to talk about... was called *ala-shahr* – the pumpkin city (where people instead of having heads had pumpkins!) in Kashmiri – for it was land of follies, fallacies and frivolities. Here one witless act was followed by others, more dense absurdities were piled upon idiocies and more ravishing stupidities took the center-space upon the boards where the absurdities were doled out for decisions. Indeed, so adept were they in the art, that they could turn anything into a raging farce. And, would wait for you to laud them. Then a really momentous thing happened to them; the gods, being what they are, would not deny the most undeserving a good turn, you see.

They actually caught a daunting marauder who had menaced the city for long. Of course, he was quickly sentenced and taken to be hanged post haste. But the murderer was a towering seven feet giant. He would fit neither the hanging scaffold not the hangman's noose. Probably, he did not fit the prison cell either for, you see, they were all dwarfs there. So they debated for long days and finally decided to catch a suiting fellow to hang—one who would fit the noose and also be conveniently hanged from the bar. The legend says that they did catch hold of man who fitted the bill and duly hanged him to meet the ends of justice. That was how the pumpkin city lived out its inanities.

From that *'alla-shahr'* comes the call for the 'rehabilitation' of the exiled Kashmir Pandits. No encamping, no situating, no settlement but full-scale rehabilitation at one go. But then, that is how the thing would happen in that city. You would have thought that all things would happen in that city. You would have thought that all things have settled, all promises have been met, all agendas have been finished before this most vexing question would be addressed, but no; they all can wait. The gun can wait too to be rooted out; the 'misled' youth can go their 'mislead' ways; the writ of the state can wait to be enforced over the few thousands square Kilometers of land that the valley is, but the Pandits must be taken in to be littered around in the most menaced districts. That done, the government can go a goodly sleep, probably abdicate too, but the Pandits must first be taken and forced into a 'rehabilitation' of its choice.

For it is a priority, the first thing that can be done and, therefore, must be done as early as possible. You may say that it exactly is not early for a government that has already spent five of its allotted six years. But God in the heaven is witness that little has been done all these long years and this, indeed, is the first thing they are attempting. See, the peace they had promised is as far away as the half moon on the Pak general's cap. The progress that had been made before is fully—irreversibly?—turned back. Except for the lone wolf Kukka, all the fellas who had made that fateful election five years ago feasible are finally laid under fathoms of earth. Unless you call the younger Farooq surveying the see-able in helicopters development, this also not been attempted. And look, that copter was attacked twice in a single day. Just like the old pre-95 days, when lawlessness was the order and law ran for cover at the slightest scent of a skirmish!

Law is now fully under cover and wraps, as marauders move like monarchs, giving protections here, extending *ammans* there, and effecting 'justices' all around. An SP in a tehsil, one was told recently, hadn't visited—hadn't dared visit—the police station in that very town over months of his stay there. The state machinery is functioning –whatever 'functioning' that can be—under the protective umbrella of the militants. And there aren't just a few in the machinery—not necessarily at the lower rungs alone—who would swear that these 'militants' there are very righteous, very judicious, very just. Never ask what they, unjust, injudicious are doing sitting in their seats; it is the *alla-shahr*, remember.

There a minister would not venture out without a double, if possible treble, security cover and yet proclaim that all is well with the world—especially the world of Kashmir—for he has heard the pippa sing upon a UK bush the other day. Crying peace, *shanti* and *amun*, all at once, in all the three languages, through it small beak and making the very air yearn for peace, gushes the machine. Yes, all is hanky dory there, except the loathing the people have for the militants. They are sick of it, so sick that they'd not come out for the census, or the panchayat pools either. But we counted them, how so falsely, and elected them too. So would we take the Pandits back. Just two or three or a dozen would do—though a hundred and twenty would be a fine show to show Musharraf his place. And it would prove that this government is taking people places, nay!

What of the remaining fifty thousand families, did you ask? What about the murders and marauders roaming freely in the valley, did you point out? What of the broken truths and vitiated atmospheres, ruptured fabrics and the general chaos? Well, these are things the two-score wise have decided not to address for with their security covers and negotiated umbrellas they have learnt to live with them.

Live as the *alla-shahris* lived under fumbling follies. For the dispensers of Kashmir's destiny have not the wish—so whence the will? – of tackling these onerous tasks. Look at the finances, security... things! Abilities, acumens and attitudes too, and you'd know that it can't be expected to take in the larger picture. Bless the vegetating soulless.

But a few scores of people it can easily scatter around to secure the hard pressed boys some easy targets for practice. Like the half year of ceasefire has secured them good leeway to regroup and recharge. That one showed that all the the militants wanted was peace. And this one if the resettled rehabilitated Pandits do survive would show that the militants are really good-tolerant fellas. And thus here is a government that finally did some trying for its six years of power. What if they get killed? Why, haven't the militants said that they wouldn't kill them ? And, whoever got the better of fates say? So Pandits gear up and go. The *alla-shahr* calls thee for none else fits the noose!

***

'Da'wat-i-irshad' from Syed Slah?......

Before he broke out with his ceasefire plan, Majid Dar was the trusted deputy of Syed Salahudin and commander of Hizbul Mujahideen. He was also among the *shoura*—intellectuals—of the 'Tahreek'. In a series of articles published in the Chattan from Srinagar—so extensive they had to be broken into several installments in the tabloid—he presented the *i'limi vajoh*—intellectual reasons—for the Tahreek, he and his colleagues were spearheading. 'It is Islam' he said again and again, bearing his contention out with profuse quotes from the Qu'ran, Sunna and Hadis—Allah's word, Mohammad's life and traditions of precept linked to him. 'It behooves not a follower to fail, to falter, to fall out in this struggle' he exhorted, placing the 'ordained fruits' as 'worthy goals for the jihadi'. Of course, no faithful could contradict him there. None did. Whatever plaints any one had—there were many, as revealed by the letters to the weekly—they related to the dissension within the ranks, the misuse of power and authority etc. etc. For the rest all responses were in effusive praise of the 'scholarly light' the commander had illumined his path with.

Then, he sued for ceasefire. Syed Slah was aghast. Differences between the high brethren in struggle stemmed from that day. It ended first in dethronement and ultimately death of Dar. One would be hard put to find a single point of divergence between Syed and his erstwhile commander in those long expositions of 'the truth of the Tahreek'. No difference there has ever been hinted at.

That Tahreek was and is for the 'glory of Islam'. That was why *kafirs* had no place in it. That was why the non-believers were forced out from what was to be the world of faith—*darul-imaan.* But since darul-imaan has not been realised yet—hence the 'struggle'!—there opens a space' a chance for non-believers either to augment the ranks as believers or to stand side with them, by side as all good *Zimmis* should. This is what Salahudin's 'call' to the Kashmiri Hindus 'to return and be a part of the struggle' is. For, the person and proclivity that could not tolerate a fellow jihadi for a difference of strategy—the slightest infarction of suing for peace— would not accept a difference of opinion on the future he has chosen for the people, state and 'struggle'. Would he? Or, must one ask: 'should he'?

So, the magnanimous Syed offers the aborigines of Kashmir the option to live in their homes and fight for the glory of the faithful and augment the struggle. In the extended interpretation of democracy, this is even seen as a 'fair offer'. One does not know if the other Syed presiding over the state of Jammu and Kashmir had this 'generous offer' in view when he said that it was 'up to the Kashmiri Pandits to return or stay away' from their ancestral place—he does come pretty close, though a seminal difference exists. Mufti Syed shies, even prevaricates, but the Hizb chief clearly tells why the Kashmiri Hindus were ousted from the valley. Only those who stood for the 'struggle', supported it and fought for it had the right to stay in the realm that was soon to go over to the faith. Those who tend to forget inconvenient things may recall that 'fall' of Kashmir, then, was believed to be imminent. All people not in-line were to be ousted. Everybody from Mufti Syed to Farooq Abdullah to Tarigami, were shown the door. Others, who could oppose the call and contention of the struggle like Abdul Sattar Ranjoor and Moulvi Farooq to name just two, were eliminated.

But there was another difference. Those who were of the faith were only temporarily out. The moment they made their peace, they could return to the valley. They did so on the first opportunity! Indeed, these people never were fully uprooted the way the Hindus were. They faced a temporary threat and waited through it outside. Their families lived there, their properties were never touched, their rights were never denied. Their 'migration' was only migration of the threatened persons part and incomplete. They had temporarily deviated but could potentially return to the fold and its focus. Hindus were different. As non-believers they could verily not be part of the 'struggle' and had better be out. Inviting them to the faith, though always open was either not deemed to be possible or advisable at that juncture. Somehow there are few who would remember those were heady days, when every new '*jumma-i-mohamad*'—Friday—promised to be the day of 'fall of Kashmir'. Fewer still are ready to see in the call and struggle of the Hizb-head the truth of the religious crusade it is.

And, none would interpret the democratic cat-calls for 'rights of Kashmiris' as such. It is not 'right'. It is also not fashionable. Others tell that it is not strategic, or politic to say so. Yet that does not change the reality. Indeed, it is time that they were told for their truth. There is no democracy, no rights, no freedoms, no choice, no say, no law, no rule of law, no courts, no constitution...nothing, there on the side where Syed Slah stays. All of them—with a variation here, a shortcoming there—not only exist on this side of the LoC, but are in full-scale operation. Mufti Syed represents that freedom of choice and choosing against which Syed Slah and his ilk have launched a 'Tahreek' and '*judojahad*'. Today Geelani calls his Hurriyat colleagues 'spies of India, US and Israel' for talking of peace while proclaiming his loyalty to the *Mamlikati-I-Khudadad*. A few years ago, he too 'gave a call' to the Kashmiri Pandits to 'return' and 'fight' by the side of the mujahids. Of course, for 'freedom and democracy'! Somehow one never thought that the choice for Kashmiri Hindus was between Salahudin and Geelani. That choice was there for all the past six hundred years of fulsome proselytizing privations. The minority was led to see the democracy and independence and its votaries from the late Sheikh to Farooq on to Mufti Syed, through Tarigami of leftist insinuation, as alternatives to the proselytizers. But how they betray the hope!

The late Sheikh, in his lucid moments had the *Zimmi*-thing in mind. Farooq, in the mouth of his erstwhile home minister, told them that they had to return in to jihadi 'culture of guns' if at all. Mufti says it himself, in his characteristic healing-touch way, leaving them the 'choice', option...everything! But the cake is not taken by the ordered ordainment of Syed Salah. It goes to all those people who see this *da'wat-i-irshad* as an 'offer', 'option' and 'path to return to the valley'. Now, who thought Return of exiled Hindus would be the 'dignity and honor' of entering the fold, in independent India of freedom and democracy!

***

KP Return : Is 'Goodwill' enough?.....

"Goodwill", says COLLIN'S-COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, "is a friendly or helpful attitude towards other people, countries, or organizations: *I invited them to dinner, a gesture of goodwill. They depend on the goodwill of visitors to pick up rubbish.*" Picking up rubbish may be a casual usage but lexicographers are rarely inattentive to what may appear as trifles to other people! In so far as the operative definition of the word is concerned the lexicon is explicit: Goodwill is between peoples, countries and organizations each of which have recognized rights and equality. They may live in amity or not, an invitation to dinner may be given, the visitors may allow the rubbish to be picked, but it is never mandatory. It can never be demanded. Goodwill is helpful in the easy intercourse, in interrelations, in smooth functioning of a composite whole. It makes for easeful camaraderie, happy banter and the like. Goodwill is the courtesy visit of a friend to your sick bed; goodwill is the ubiquitous Kashmiri Muslims visiting their exiled Hindu neighbors telling them how their homes were gutted or who looted the goods there.

Goodwill does a little more. It hides you in the face of dire threat as many Muslim friends and neighbors did during the 1990s. It made some Muslims risk their lives to procure Pandit friends a taxi, a truck for quick deportation. It genuinely and profusely weeps when it sees a long lost Pandit appear suddenly in his ancestral *mohalla* or village. It, however, cannot give him assurance of a night-stay. Or, Return as such. For that the much-loved 'visitor' is advised—in goodwill, of course—to seek protection of the security or—better still!—the 'sanction' from the local '*Mujahid Sahib*'. Because, goodwill is too frail a link to hold heavy implications; too fragile a word to keep a fiend at bay. That is why it did not—as it could not—stand in the way of the people forcing the Kashmir minority out, looting their houses or torching them. Or, singling them out for killing whenever they tried to return in the early nineties. That was not—is not—a lack of goodwill at all. Indeed, goodwill saw all this happen before its eyes. And wept, helplessly. That goodwill between individual members of the Kashmir's majority and minority communities is in good evidence even after one and a half decades of the latter having been exiled.

Often this goodwill between individual members is so apparent that it confuses them good. It usually ends up confounding the issue of Pandit-Return both at the hands of their well-wishers as well as the government. As it seems to be doing in the apparently well-meaning chief of this state, unless there are ulterior motives operating behind the appealing façade! The PDP is ever pointing to this goodwill. So much so that many say Mahbooba's fulmination against the Pandits at a Delhi seminar about 'disincentives of return' was an error in the goodwill act. Only, she has not said it was so. In fact, goodwill does not go so far. For the government here has little to offer than tenuous goodwill. No talk — nor even an appreciation— of the security concerns of the exiled. No mention of rights or guarantees. No mechanisms to ensure it. No Confidence Building Measures for them. The Pandits have been crying for extension of the 'Healing Touch' to the exiled community but they are still unheard. Indeed, the Hizb chief across the borders did one better and was more specific—return at the mercy…err, 'goodwill' of the Mujahids and fight alongside them to ensure your stay. In Muslim kingdoms of yore this was the proviso of *Zimmi*-protection, obtained on a payment called *Jazia*. Salahudin puts *Jazia* in a kindly and modern context! Before Salahudin, Geelani offered the same prospect—sans the protection clause. That 'offer', the Pandits are told, 'still stands'.

The government too goes a little ahead, in another direction. It cites the tourists pouring into the valley, the non-vallites serving two-year tenures there and the 6000 Pandits who 'did not migrate' as 'evidence' that there is 'goodwill' for Return. Recall the Collin's usage—the goodwill of visitors to pick up rubbish—and the vagueness of the whole thing becomes clear. Applied to Pandits it means that 'the Pandits must depend on the goodwill of the majority to be allowed to 'pick up crumbs at the Kashmir table'. Perchance to sit somewhere around. Visitors, whether from Mumbai or Malaysia, come for a fortnight. The sole 'argument' used to prevent terrorists from striking the tourists in the valley is that it hits the livelihood of the Kashmiris. As for tenure-postings the employees rarely venture out of their security hotels. They never stay more than two years. And the Pandits who are still there! Would anybody know their travails, troubles and persecution, better than their exiled brethren? Yet these are the 'arguments' handed out from Kashmir to Karnataka by the well-meaning chief minister of the state to prove that there is goodwill and hence enough gurantee for KP's to return.

Curiously they are getting heard and believed too, as if goodwill were enough and all. As if the exodus of a whole community were a fluke, the certain and selective genocide a non-occurrence and their right-less, land-less existence for the last fourteen years a non-event. There are travesties in the democratic India but you have to search for a more callous one to match this all-out deprivation being portrayed as a mere mishap. Even before the final kick-out in 1990 the minority in Kashmir was a much persecuted community. Many a time the resolution of the government and ruling parties were specifically directed to bear down this minority. A silent 'migration' — actually a contrived exile—was forced upon it for all the four decades preceding the precipitate ejection. Even today many people there count the ejection of the minority as 'sole achievement' of the '*Tahreek*'. Ironically enough it was the goodwill—friendly help, solicitous facilitation, kind assistance from the majority *monami's* —that aided, abetted and drove both the silent as well as the precipitate exodus of Pandits. It also 'eased, facilitated, assisted' half a dozen other exiles that Kashmiri Hindus have seen in these past centuries.

That eviction can recur any time a terrorist decides he has a point to score, anytime a communal clash occurs elsewhere, anytime a foreign power wants to play in Kashmir... anytime a neighbor gets the crusader's itch! Anytime an individual, an outfit or a political party decides to score democratic or demonic points. Goodwill is too frail to stand all that. Alone, it is too insufficient, too insecure, for a return.

***

Confront the Two-Nation Theory in Kashmir.....

Happy the hare at morning, for she cannot read
The hunter's waking thoughts.

—W.H.Auden

It is a rueful nation that needs the sharp report of gun-fire to awaken from its slumbers. Sorrier still, the one that every day sees reckless brutality wrecked, and yet keeps singing of a new morn. There is a difference between wishes and horses; when nation substitute reality with fantasy, they can only reap shocks and angst. Pipa's songs are alright for a pipa—it lives in a strife less world, where cunning and deceit and cruelty, for their own sake, are unknown—but, ours is a world where men not only 'hear each other groan' that connive actively to bring other men to grief.

For the last seven years, we have been witness to a re-enactment of the brutalities, that Sikandar Shah perpetrated six hundred years ago. History remembers him as '*butshikan*', for his obsessive idol-breaking. He also broke the well woven Kashmiri skein, by forcing out all Hindus, who refused to convert. Hindus have again been herded out, their temples razed and their homes. burnt down. The last few months have seen a spurt in vandalizing of their properties: large-scale felling of the trees belonging to migrants, axing of their orchards and encroachment of their lands has occurred. Nobody knows the extent to which revenue records have been tampered with. It is difficult to call all this a simple 'deluge' or 'upheaval' or to deny its strong communal design. Unless this truth is incorporated in an analysis of Kashmir, understanding will be elusive and incorrect.

The elaborate thesis built by Jagmohan around the corruption and administrative lapses, to explain the rise of militancy, is as incorrect as the alternative apologist projection, which attributes it to unemployment and sundry other grievances of the people. It is the communal nationalism as preached by Jinnah, whose flourishing we see in the conflagration of Kashmir. Neither corruption, nor unemployment in the state, is anywhere near the level that obtains in other states of the country. Even within the state, Kashmir has been garnering a far bigger chunk of opportunities than Jammu and Ladakh; the administrative machinery in the valley had always been more vigilant, more circumspect and the people there have always had a better access to the powers at the helm. Yet militancy arose in the valley and not other regions.

Pakistan born of communal nationalism of the Muslim variety, will naturally be at hand to nurture it, but the culpability of the Indian double-speak, that goes by the name of 'secularism' needs be taken note of. Whenever the communal trends have surfaced, the rulers have played ostrich and buried their heads in mounds of sand. Betimes it is dictated by vote-calculations, often this refusal to acknowledge budding anti-nationalism, originates from a misconceived notion that it will vanish by denial; it only grows and gathers momentum. Nations are not built nor thrive, upon faulty appraisals of the ground realities. The first step towards tackling anti-nationalism is an unambiguous congnisance of underlaying factors. Sadly this has been lacking in India as a whole and Kashmir in particular. The result is an unsettled situation after 50 years of development and democracy. It is worth notice that Jammu and Ladakh have had no stake in militancy, autonomy, nor any fear of getting 'absorbed' in the Indian nation; they, in fact, have been actively demanding total merger. So have 'migrants', the exiled minority of Kashmir, been demanding.

Ejection of 'migrants' stemmed from this absolute adherence of theirs to Indian nationalism. Farooq Abdullah fled to London, all the leaders with national out-look refuge out of the valley, all Hindus left their homes to lodge in tents at Jammu, to escape death and desecration. Three classes of people died in Kashmir: the militants showered bullets and sought bullets; numberless passive citizens were, inadvertently, caught in the cross-fires of bullets. The last category comprised of Indians, who rejected the theory of communal nationalism. Many of these, perceived as obstacles to insurgency, were branded 'spies' and 'traitors' and were systematically eliminated. Others were killed simply for their beliefs and adherence to nationalism. Among these were Wali Mohd. Iytoo, Sheikh Mansoor, Tiklal Taploo and hosts of others, whose beliefs brought about their death. Among these were the scores of Indians Muslims engaged in petty trade in Kashmir; among these were the hordes of 'migrants' who were offered the choice of death or exile. Among these were the seven Kashmiri Pandits, massacred the other day.

It is anti-nationalism, not a misconception, to treat all these men, together, as so many lives lost; those who died for their national stances cannot be equated with the anti-national and communal elements killed in a war of their choosing. A militant killed is a death, but Mushir-ul-haq killed is a nation challenged; a man dying in a chance barrage of bullets is an unfortunate victim, but Iytoo tracked and trailed is a decimation, the nation can ignore only at its peril. Kashmir analysts have lacked this perspectival appreciation. A trained terrorist my be son of Kashmir, but he has forfeited any claim to the citizenship of Kashmir or India. When we equate a militant's death with the killing of Neel Kanth Ganjoo, we are not only bring unjust but also profane the sacred ethos of nationalism.

Today one sees a mischievous clubbing together of militants and security forces. The saboteur and the security-man are not Mahmood and Ayaz, to be stood in the same line and fired upon! It should not be difficult to see who are sought to be placated, even encouraged, by ambiguities like 'Kashmiris are being killed' or 'the army has despoiled Kashmir'. Space does not permit here an examination of the garbled concept of 'Kashmiriat' but it can hardly run counter to Indian nationalism. Similar fillipancy charactererise the attitude towards exiled Hindus of Kashmir. The point sought to be made is that instead of covert pampering of communal nationalism unleashed in Kashmir, it needs be cognized in its truth and confronted as such... sincerely, unambiguously. Unless we wake to these realities, peace and tranquility will remain a mirage; the doves shall writhe in blood, and Kashmir will be killed every day, in sevens and tens and hundreds.

***

Towards a lasting solution of Kashmir.....

Kashmir tangle needs no introduction. Only a few years back, when we lived in a bipolar world, it had the dubious distinction of being recognized as one of the flash-points capable of sparking the third world conflagration. That probability may have receded, but Kashmir continues as a major issue of contention in the sub-continent. It has been said, that being bereft of a solid raison d'etre, Pakistan will always raise phantasmagoric spectres, centered on India, if only to justify its existence. Right now Kashmir provides a natural rallying point.

In this context Farooq Abdullah's suggestion to settle the issue, by apportioning the state into Indian and Pakistani parts as per the position on ground, deserves serious thought. The frivolous reactions this proposal has received from Indian politicians from BJP to senior central ministers, shows that Kashmir has begun to evoke vain emotionalism in our country too, which is unfortunate. Ours is a tradition of mature statesmanship, based on neat assessment and logical reasoning, unexpired by hype. The issue needs be examined dispassionately in its contextual frame.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir that acceded to India comprised an area of 222,236 sq kilometers, probably more. Yet before the instrument of Accession was signed, quite a goodly chunk had been occupied by Pakistan. After the marauders had been beaten back, they still held 84,000sq. km of the state territory. This 40% of the state comprising the principalities of Gilgat. Skardn, Balthistan etc. continues in Pakistani possession—about 2/3rd as the so called "Northern Territories" directly linked to Pakistan and the rest as the farce of 'Azad Kashmir'.

Commentators on the war of 1947 all concur that Indian army was close to recovering the whole state but was restrained by the Govt of India, allegedly on the advice of Sheikh Abdullah. It has also been said that Sheikh was interested only in liberation of the Kashmiri speaking valley for politicial and demographic reasons and did not want the other areas added to the state. That conjecture may need conclusive evidence, yet it is remarkable that he never was overly insistent upon the recovery of the occupied lands. In 1964 Nehru sent him on a peace mission to Pakistan about which he sounds very enthusiastic in his autobiography. Nehru's death, while Sheikh was still in Pakistan, cut the mission short, yet there had been a plan of sorts which he had taken to Lahore. '*Aitishi-I-chinar*' carries an interesting observation on the working of UNO, where Sheikh Abdullah had gone to represent India. Nobody in the world, says he, was interested in solving our problem; every-one was looking for personal gains to be obtained from the dispute.

Simla Agreement, which forced Sheikh Abdullah to come to terms with the Indian government, converted the fluid 'cease-fire line' into a more concrete 'line of control'. Then it was widely believed that India and Pakistan had arrived at a settlement at Shimla but had deffered final agreement till the public opinion in the respective countries was brought round. Common perception, subsequently confirmed by P N Dhar who was closely associated in the talks, was that 'LoC' was to be recognized as the international border and the state was to be apportioned, into Indian and Pakistani-held areas.

It is relevant to note here, that ever since the inception of the Republic of India, neither the govt of India nor that of the J&K has exercised any administrative control over Pak occupied Kashmir (POK), though legally it is Indian land and "Indians" live there, for whom we have kept 25 seats vacant and reserved in the state legislature. None of these seats has ever been filled up. Sentiments apart, Pak occupied Kashmir (POK) to all intents and purposes has been an alien land. When in 1984 the state legislature preferred the 'Resettlement Bill' to ease the inflow of these Indians back, public opinion throughtout the country vehemently opposed any such measure and the Bill lapsed for the want of presidential assent.

Before the insurgency was started in the valley, Siachin had become staple Pakistani diet domestically and in international fora. The ignition of the frozen glaciers was carefully engineered, when Kashmir cooled off in the wake of 1975 Indira-Sheikh accord. Interestingly, there has been no mention by Pakistan of Siachin since 1990, although the troops there are as active today as they had been in the early 80's. Foreign hand may not be behind a train accident in Muradabad or collapse of a skyscraper in Delhi, but it is unwise not to see instigation by vested foreign interests behind Pakistani fulminations. And Pakistan will, any day, sell its soul for support on the issue; it has been doing it, and it has been getting support. India's emergence as a power on the world scene, eminently calls for restraint in the strategic assessment of many countries. A standing feud comes in handy for the purpose.

The question we ought to ponder is how significant PoK is to the country. Shall a give and take here, amount to an impingement of the sovereignty of the nation? The issue has to be assessed against a possible solution of the vexatious dispute and lasting peace. The land has never been under India; its people have practically never been Indians. It is a legacy of a family feud that engrosses us in fruitless litigation: the 'positions are ridiculous, costs exorbitant and the pleasure momentary'. Instead of knee-jerk responses, the statesmanship of this country must render some straight answers. Would we wage war to recover PoK? Do we expect the UNO or the International Court of Justice to deliver a just decision, in the matter? Will Pakistan, of its own, relinquish its illegal occupation and restore the land and people to India? Do our diplomats believe that they can talk Pakistan into returning the occupied Kashmir?

If the answer is an emphatic NO, would it not be appropriate to arrive at a solution along the LOC as Farooq Abdullah has suggested. Whatever psychological trauma the occupation caused to the people and their families, is past and exists no longer. The two portions have been parts of separate countries, for half a century. Settlement of Kashmir may not answer all Pakistani grouses. As said earlier, their need for anti-India props is great, but we would thus prick their belligerent sails, well. Giving up PoK for a lasting solution is small price, indeed. If Kashmir tangle has not effected the development of our country as it has that of Pakistan, it certainly has occasioned much unsettling within Kashmir. We can remove this irritant and do the poor Pakistani masses much good in the passing.

***

And Now, A Hurriyat Ceasefire!.....

Koley grazaan kyazi chhakh?
Aagur vuchhith.
('Hey, rivulet, why are thou so boisterous?'
'My eyes, I fix, on my source'.)

A survey of Hurriyat and its responses to cease-fires would be more than sufficient to show that this 'true representative of Kashmir' has its eyes fixed closely on its source. It ebbs and flows, gets belligerent and peaceful... all in conformity with the 'home country'. Indeed there is a rising opinion both within the state and the nation, which far from acknowledging Hurriyat as representing any voice of the people of this nation, roundly questions the credentials of this foreign managed, foreign tuned and foreign turned organization and its right to speak to the Indian people and its government. But so hard has this nation imbibed the habit, of listening to its detractors more than its supporters, that it is always the anti-national or a-national people who get all the ears in this realm. These elements even question the right of the nationalists to speak. And, that perversion too gets not only heard but even respected and appreciated.

Thus when this very Hurriyat said that the central interlocutor on Kashmir should not speak to the pro-India groups, K C Pant did not turn many ears to the anti-terrorist, anti-Pakistan forces here. In fact, one lasting grouse of the nationalist elements in this state, particularly the valley of Kashmir, has been that the nationalist voice has always been given a short shrift by the national leadership and government. So it was in the time when the Congress ruled the roost and so it is with BJP now. That, probably, is one reason why no government makes any difference to the situation in the state. The interlocutors are the same, the opinions are the same, and the solutions are the ones that have failed so often. Kashmir is not a case for Pakistan but a case for Kashmiris living there who are Indians. For the Pakistanis let them speak out to their mentors and controllers. Let them seek solutions there. They should not be allowed to prevail upon the opinions of the Indians in the nation of India.

But, this nation is so given to listening to the other point that it is plainly forgetting what its own point has been. There is a high dispute here. That dispute is with Pakistan. It is over half the landmass of this state that Pakistan has held in illegal occupation for the past half-a-century. Yet we have the spectacle of the Indian government leading a new round of 'talks' with Hurriyat, the mouthpiece of Pakistan. Wouldn't India be better off talking to Pakistan over the dispute instead of having herself harangued by Pak loyalties within her own territory? And, India must shake off the misconception that Hurriyat is anything more than a setup of Pakistan. Call them pro-Pak elements and that still leaves the question what exactly are the Pak-element dong in the nation of India? Why should they be here; why should they be listened to? Have they ever tried to sympathize with the aspirations of the people they claim to 'truly represent'? When the Pakistani sponsored terrorists over-ran Kashmir in the early nineties they became 'the representatives' of Kashmiri'. When the people, welcomed the Ikhwani cadres for freeing them from the Pak-terrorists' yoke, the Hurriyat actually opposed them.

When the outfit of Kashmiri Militants, 'after careful consideration' declared a ceasefire, they were the first to oppose it. Of course, on directions of Pak establishment whose interests and aspirations they represent. When Vajpayee declared the Ramadan ceasefire and even Qayyum Khan from across the border welcomed it, they opposed it just as did the Pak establishment. They opposed everything, till the head of Pak establishment decided to come to Agra; then, they even 'suspended their struggle' evidently on dictation of those very sources. There, at the infamous tea party in the Pak High Commission, the Hurriyat actually declared its Pakistani character, in those very words. It even entered into an altercation with the Shahi Imam of Delhi on the point. When the terrorist's organization called for a bundh against this same Pak establishment, they opposed it. And, proved how false their claim of 'true representation' was. And, now that that establishment has been shamed in the eye, the Hurriyat comes not only with a 'ceasefire' but also 'talks'. Pray, whose interest, whose viewpoint, whose pleasure, whose organisation the Hurriyat is?

It certainly is not an organization of Indians who want to put some grievances across. It is not talking for the people of Kashmir who have given them no mandate of any sort for the purpose. It is not even talking for itself for its self and soul is all vouched to that master across the border. Who is there to talk, then? If India intends to talk to Pakistan through this mouthpiece it is committing a diplomatic blunder, because it is giving Pakistan leverage from within its own territory, from within her own people. When Sheikh went to talk to Ayub in sixties he went there as an emissary of Nehru.

Would Vajpayee call any of the Hurriyat men who go to Pakistan an emissary of his? Certainly not. It would be a Pak factotum going to talk to his Pakistani masters! From the Indian perspective there should be no talking to, no talking with, and no talking through the Pak agents. Yet, how hard it is making this India understand that!

Division is half the solution!.....

Jammu and Kashmir State in the map projections of India comes through as a gracefull head on an elegant body. In truth, ever since that elegant body has come into being, that head has remained shorn of its appealing appendages. At it is best a glorified mole there. That is how it actually is, that is how it would have been had not state and its statesmen clung to an imaginary vision. That imagination talks of 222-thousand square kilometers, and every official map holds those dainty ears up misleading a billion people into a falsity.

Of course, the state that acceded to India did have those 'ears' jutting out. Historically, legally, constitutionally, those areas are rightfully India's claim and hold. But India that was constituted then, never held those lands. That is status as it obtains. And, the world we are living in has come to have a profound respect for the status quo. The lines have been set and those lines are simply not to be crossed. The once blue-eyed boy of US, Saddam Hussein discovered that truth in Kuwait, as did the other US protege Pakistan find it out in Kargil. A billion assertions over the past fifty years, and the L.O.C of Simla agreement to boot, make it impossible seeing India cross the lines to reclaim those territories. So where is the loss in according sanctioning a permanency to it?

That is one possible solution of the 'Kashmir dispute'. It will seal a reality as truth and lift the veils of fiction that have come to envelope Kashmir. That will also stabilize the psychological wobble in Kashmir. Much as it may amuse you seeing the 'democratic crusaders' in Kashmir not only calling upon the illegimate autocrats in Pakistan to aid in their aspirations, but also pressing in their rights there-in, yet that is a reality of Kashmir situation. Even as the safeguard of the integrity is a nation's duty, settlement of minor disputes does not detract from the national interest or honour. As it is, the dispute is only helping the disruptive forces; settled, it would solve quite a bit of the tangle.

But only a bit! The other part relates to the people within. Even as India is one large conglomeration of diversities, the state of Jammu and Kashmir represents this diversity sharpened into cut edge discordances. It can be argued that the state living abnormally over the past half a century, with the political as well as developmental emphasis focused on a part of the state and populace alone, has been largely instrumental in precipitating the current fracas. Now the regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh represent not only geographical fault lines but virtually opposing aspirations, social, cultural as well as political.

Probably, with a soothing touch of understanding, by the always in-power majority, the difference could have been ironed out and a working unity established. Probably, the ruling majority never thought, it had obligations vis-a-vis the ruled minority and the subordinated people and regions. In any case, it has been overly preoccupied with its own grouses, its own privileges and its own preemption. And, the already existing differences have got accentuated into hot diffidence. Today, the linguistic identities, regional aspirations, economics and developmental disparities have become shrill discords. The discordance is shrillest in the political sphere.

Thus while the state cites statute, law and 'promise' to demand greater powers from centre, it in turn refuses to devolve the same further down, leaving each region a crying. Besides, while Kashmir is crying for autonomy to restrict the intercourse with the nation to the minimum, Jammu would be happier with an abrogation of 370, the state subject law too, and Ladakh would be the happiest as a union territory. Probably, the last is true only of the Ladakh proper, while Kargil may opt for a closer connection with Kashmir. But, what of Zanskar? And, there you are ignoring the religious angle and fathering a dozen illegitimacies!

The greatest illegitimacy of them all is the eviction of ethnic Hindus from Kashmir, about which one party blames the other, but all gang up to keep them out. As Farooq Abdullah pointedly asked the Hurriyat, the other day: where do the Hindus figure in your scheme? Don't these aborigines of Kashmir deserve a place in Kashmir, a say in its affairs, a consideration in the schemes that are cooked up there? Yes, how can the people who swear by 'right's' and 'identities' trample underfoot the rights and identities of others? And, these Kashmiris do not support the jehadi freedom, or autonomy, or insurgency, or any of the things that Kashmir has come to stand for.

Part of the Kashmir problem lies in the borders. A part also lies in the discordances – cultural, linguistic, and political – that are clubbed in it. Similar anomalies in states from erstwhile Madras to Punjab were resolved through the state's reorganization, but that solution left the 'special' J&K untouched. That specialty is now a suppurating sore, needing a sharp scalpel. That may also bring the state a much needed reality check. And, with the aspirations properly identified, may even bring a solution to the Kashmir tangle.

Talking to hollows in the wood!.....

Gilani's Jamati-I-Islami was never a popular party in Kashmir. Nor a popular creed. For the over-whelming majority of Sunni Muslims the percepts and practices of Jamat have always been an anathema. The best Gilani could ever muster was a measly 4-seat strength from 42 constituencies of the valley. The same goes for the dozen or so Hurriyat leaders who have been mere fringe elements in Kashmir. Late Moulvi Farooq had managed to unleash a raging *Sher-Bakra* feud in Srinagar but when it came to a real test it could translate into just one seat in the house and that too inconsistently. People's Conference, Awami League, Awami National Conference, Abas Ansari....all remained inconsequent ciphers, or at best ones or twos, on the political scene of the valley.

Then, came the militancy. For all that the befooled analysts may say, militancy did get a rousing reception from the people. Had Hizb-ul-Mujahideen burst upon the scene first, it may not have found so good a welcome, but the name KLF helped. The terror helped. The arbitrariness of the terrorists, in enforcing Islam, helped. The almost total abdication of the state authority, symbolized by the Union Home Minister weeping into the TV cameras, helped. More importantly, their cry crouched...no, careered to Islamic echo helped make the terrorism a resounding boom. In it the miffed fringe leaders found a sympathetic resonance. Now, it is as much incorrect to say that it was these peripheral elements that brought militancy into the valley, as it is to insinuate that these leaders jumped on to the militant bogey for political gain. The two actually, found a natural meeting place. And met, one as the horrendous terrorism and other as its erratically 'popular' mask. One unleashed terror, the other became its civil apologizer. Natural allies, did you say?

As militancy grew, Hurriyat became leadership. Aberrations and obscurities had had themselves ganged up and the mantle of leadership thrust upon them. It was a proxy leadership, for it was the only one that the terrorists allowed. Of course, because it drummed the same beat. No, not by coercion, but from heart. One may not call them wage-less spokesman of terrorists, but one would not get a truer characterization. It is also incorrect to infer that because Hurriyat people enjoyed a modicum of popularity during the heydays of militancy they represent the leadership of Kashmir as, say, Sheikh Abdullah did. Kashmir remains Kashmir, a Sunni heartland that may temporally compromise with anything from Ayatollah to Hizbul Mujahideen but would stick with its own creed of Islam in the long run. That is why even after a decade-full of militancy dominated by pro-Jamat terrorist, Jamat-i-Islami is still a minor force there. So are the other 'leaders' who sit with Jamat upon the Hurriyat platter. Ciphers still, peripherals again.

That is why the much touted 'talks' may be inconsequential. These people whom the quirk of militancy has turned into leaders command little following, save what has been vouchsafed to them by the militants. Their clout as well as the position flows from the terrorists' guns! And theirs would not be the hands to turn those barrels away. Nor, probably, the minds to so desire. Then, they are too many standing upon too little ground that they would overturn any table they sit at. It used to be said that Pakistanis had intentionally grouped the terrorists into differing, almost discordant, bands as an insurance against their getting persuaded by India to peace. The elements of Hurriyat are naturally discordant. They may all agree on Islam and Pakistan, but that is where their agreement ends. They differ sharply on the model and modalities of their purposed activity. They are keen, to the level of sensitivety, on the issue of inter se position, importance and status.

When Indira Gandhi talked to Sheikh Abdullah, she talked to a leader who could take the Kashmiris with him, anywhere. When Rajiv Gandhi made a pact with Farooq, he had with him a person who carried a substantial clout in Kashmir. Even Kuka Parray could muster following of a fired, devoted band. Gilani, Gani Lone, Ab Gani... are not the leaders who can turn the tide of Kashmir, much less trundle terrorism back. The failure of Shabir Shah with his Gandhian twig and assumed temperance is an illustration, if you need one. Umer is a 'leader' till he speaks the language of intransigence. For peace and 'settlement', they are sheer non-starters. If still there are doubts, remember how they went to Delhi for 'talks' and ended up having a seven-hour heartful talk with the Pak envoy. Or, witness the denials the Jamat is issuing on Gilani's utterances in Delhi.

So, should the 'talks' be given up? Somebody, it is said, once asked Socrates whether he should marry. The sage is said to have replied: yes, by all means; if you get a good wife, that would be good for you; if you get a bad one you'd become a philosopher, and that would be good for all. So talk by all means. Already the talk of 'talks' has given India a psychological edge. And' Gilani too has talked of 'division'. Talking may bring some good, in some way though not the good, in the way the erring wise men of Delhi hope for. And, it would definitely help to know whom you are talking to.

***

Accession, Autonomy and Kashmir

Accession is like Hindu marriage... done once for all. It is a totality in itself. Accession of states is the unarguable surrender of the right to secede. Once a unit has acceded to the whole it gives up, for good, the choice to reconsider that one decision. The modalities, the conditions, the extent can be renegotiated, reconsidered even resettled but the primary fact of accession remains final and unalterable. On this principle is based the stability of nations. Thus the federating states of USA or the confederates of Canada can do anything save secede from their respective unions; nor for that matter do Baluchistan or Sind retain the right to withdraw from the union of Pakistan.

In principle J&K that includes Kashmir has acceded to India as per the Independence Act of 1947. The act required only the seal and signature of the ruler. Kashmir accesssion as Sheikh Mohd Abdullah so punstakingly tells in "*Aitish-i-chinar*", had the seconding and mediation of the 'lion of Kashmir' thrown in. The undisputed leader of Kashmir masses has further recorded that he went from Mountbatten to Nehru and ultimately to Gandhiji to get the Indian Govt. to accede to his request for accession of the state. The Maharaja after toying with the idea of joining Jinnah and a position of independent equidistance from both the dominions had finally seen the need of accession to Indian Union.

Of course, in the backdrop of these peregrinations ranged the Pakistani marauders in tribal garb who had been setting the valley

October cool ablaze with merry bone fires of Kashmir homes. Again in the kindling light of a Kashmir on fire a debate on autonomy for the state is being conducted. Crisscrossing the fretful light is the obfuscation each side seeks to cast upon the issue by refusing to outline the contours of the proposed autonomy. It, therefore, is imperative, that the issue be analyzed in some depth;

Autonomy means self government; within a country it implies devolution of greater powers to a constituent state. Like an individual's freedoom stopping where another's nose begins, the regional or state autonomy ceases where it hurts the concept of a nation. Within these limits autonomy is a negotiable issue, whose quantum may vary. But autonomy does or include independence. As long as the integrity and sovereignty of the nation is not, compromised, autonomy can, in theory, be of any extent. Thus we have unitary, quasi-federal , federal even nonfederal polities... all existing in the world, depending upon the extent to which powers are allocated to the constituent parts History, societal organization, political exigencies all contribute to determine the form of polity a nation adopts.

India as envisioned in the document of Constitution, is a unitary state with quasifederal features. States are given powers of self government, but the union has overriding powers. The whole gamut of governmental powers has been divided into three lists, central, state and concurrent list. While the Center and the States enjoy exclusive powers over their respective lists, both exercise authority over the matters in the concurent list. Supremacy of union over the States consists in that all the residual powers i.e. those not stated in the concurrent list, lie with it and it has authority to over-ride the state legislation in the matters of the concurrent list The state legislatures have a definite secondary position vis-à-vis the parliament which is also recognized as the supreme authority in the Indian dispensation. This, together with the appointment and powers of governor, is the crux of autonomy debate in the country, where many states are clamoring for more powers.

But this is not so with Jammu and Kashmir. The state enjoys over-riding powers vis-à-vis the Parliament. Unlike the other states, J&K has a federal status, bordering on con-federal. As per the constitution of India in the substance of article 370, all the powers are vested with the state; apart from the state list, the powers in the central as well as the concurrent lists are bestowed upon the legislature of the state. While the writ of the Union Parliament prevails over the other 25 state legislatures, the J&K legislature has exclusive jurisdiction over the central list too. This state alone can legislate on all the matters. Parliament can legislate only those matters in the central list, which the president, with the permission of the state, has notified to it.

This position implies a total surrender of all powers—central state and concurrent—to the state by the centre. Whereas the Indian states have exclusive jurisdiction only over the state list, J&K has virtual authority over all the three lists. It is the centre which has to ask for more powers here. Indeed, it has begged for more powers, through negotiation over the years. Grudgingly the state has given the centre power with regard to some matters in the central list like defense, external affairs, communication, account-auditing, Supreme Court and Election Commission jurisdictions. The state retains exclusive jurisdiction over the state list, concurrent list, the remaining provisions of the central list and the residuary matters.

It is noteworthy, that the powers ceded by the state to the centre extended only to some provisions of the central list, which the Indian Constitution meant to be under the exclusive jurisdiction of the union. This is what is variously termed as dilution, erosion, derogation or dismantling of the article 370 and state autonomy.

Another issue, that inevitably crops up is that of central laws. Since 1975 repeal of central laws has frequently been called for. In the late '70s a high powered committee had also been set up for the purpose, but no laws were repealed or identified. Constitutionally no law enacted by the Parliament can be enforced in the state, except with respect to the items ceded by the state to it and duly notified by the President. It will be invalid, illegal. The laws in force in J&K, are those enacted by the state legislature. JK Laws run into several volumes, and all can be nullified by a simple majority in the state Assembly. In addition, the state has concurrent jurisdiction over the matters that have been ceded to the Parliament. As early as 1960 the Supreme Court of India has upheld this authority of the state.

This however does not exhaust the range of autonomous powers enjoyed by the state. Provisions under article 352 which empower the President to convert the whole country into a tight unitary state apply the J & K only in the case of emergency decleared in face of external aggresion and not in other cases. Financial emergency which allows the centre to reduce salaries, expenditures etc., in the states as well as at center, also does not apply to the state. As pointed out by Justice Anand, this provision exists despite its apparent amenability. In this light there would be seen to be little to be given to the state of J&K to enhance its autonomy, the heat, hype and hope generated by the debate not withstanding. So far as the nomenclature of state heads is concerned, it was stated by Mrs. Gandhi in the parliament, after the 1975 Accord that it is something the state has chosen and may change it when deemed fit. The irony of the situation is that where J& K is concerned, the state has all the powers and centre has none; those the centre has have been made over to it by the state and to a limited extent only.

A question then arises as to why there is so much talk of autonomy. Narasimha Rao's promise of "... anything short of Azadi" rings loud and clear in all minds and, so does the so called commitment of United Front to autonomy for J&K . The fact is that autonomy means different things to different people. Its implications vary for the same person when in power and when out of it. President's rule under article 356 is an issue of great contention between the centre and the state, yet it was Sheikh Abdullah who prevailed upon the centre in 1976 to bring the state under President's rule for the first time. The point sought to be made is that autonomy is more an emotive issue than serious political discussion. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the scholar that he is, was probably speaking literally; when he said 'anything short of Azadi'. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is having autonomy to limit. You simply can't go beyond.

Autonomy or rather the "lack" of it, has been posited as the major obstacle in the progress and prosperity of our state yet we find that states like Kerala, Punjab or Gujarat or Maharashtra, enjoying much restricted powers, have advanced spectacularly. Nor, for that matter, are the people of France, living in a total unitary state, any less free. It needs be appreciated that state under British Raj and states of independent India are two different entities. Our parliament in Delhi is not the imperial government in London. Add to it the paradox of a state enjoying maximum powers, asking for more and the inescapable conclusion emerges that the rhetoric on autonomy is a political exigency. The leaders need it to garner votes; people need it to shore their flagging psyche and intellectuals need it to sustain their cogitations. And, so the controversy rages, dust rises and all live happily in the hazy obfuscation.

***

But, why should J&K be special?.....

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has a special position in the Indian union by virtue of the article 370. It is a state different from the other states in that it has a constitution as well as a flag of its own. The people of the state enjoy an exalted citizenship as they, apart from the general citizenship of India, have the exclusive citizenship of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. That citizenship permits them, inter alia to hunt and fleece the endangered chiru, weave its fluffy down into shawls and wear them as well as sell them, even as the animal is a protected species all over the country... nay, all over the world! But, apparently, that huge special status is not enough. Kashmir—yes, Jammu and Kashmir must be still more special to attain for 'her people full freedom, development and expression' to fulfill their aspirations. Of course, within the Indian Union. But, why? Why should the people of Kashmir.. yes, yes, Jammu and Kashmir be so hugely special?

Perhaps one should sit back and enjoy the special status instead of questioning its reason and logic. But that is possible only if one does not identify with the other 99 crores of Indians who are not special at all. Yes, why is a Kashmiri or a Jammuite special vis-à-vis, say, a Bengali? Because, he speaks a different tongue? Wears a different dress? Carries a different colour upon his skin? For one, all these differences are just variations upon the same theme in language, robe and hue. Even, culture. More importantly Bengali is as much a language as Kashmiri or Dogri, if not a more accomplished one. A

Keralaite is as conscious, as proud of his distinct culture as a Kashmiri. The same goes for an Assamese, a Gujrati... any and every person. Yet, a Kashmiri is special, is deemed to deserve a special status, and a Keralite remains non-special. Why?

Now if the state of J&K were awfully poor or exceedingly rich the rationale for a special position could be understood. But, the state is like the two dozen other states, here. Is it because it is a hilly state that a special status is being demanded and given? But then Himachal adjoining it is more hilly. So is Sikkim. Both of them have distinct languages, dress and food habits. No, the terrain of the state does not justify being singled out for a special treatment. Nor, does the fact that the state houses the famous valley of Kashmir qualify it for a special status. The valley is just 8% of the landmass of the state. And other states too boast of valleys though smaller and less famous ones. Yes, nothing much special here.

If not geography does history give the state's claim for being special provides any plausibility? Kashmir does have the distinction of having a regular history for itself in Kalhan Pandit's Rajtarangani. Shaivism is a distinct dimension in the religious lore of India. With Sharda it is the fount of a distinguished script that has mothered scripts within and outside the country. From Bilhana to Kalidasa hers has been a rich contribution to the ethos and culture of the country. The state under Maharaja Harisingh was one of the half a dozen largest states of the princely India. Yet, none of these would vouch a special status. These distinctions, how so worthy, are just pale counters to the larger Indian lore, ethos and culture.

Does the feud with Pakistan make it special? No... no way. If anything the trouble has made the state leaner and meaner in that large chunks have virtually been shorn off its pate leaving it a truncated thing. The dispute with Pakistan, as the PM so rightly though much belatedly pointed out, is over the restoration of the POK. The rest of the state is in legitimate accession with the other Indian states forming the Union of India. Yes, the state does seem to form the head of the country at least in the projection maps. But then one can attach greater importance to the head against the feet only at the risk of being called iniquitous, if not a bloody castiest pig. And there you are, without a clue to the reason for being special!

Well! What then is the rationale for a special status of Jammu and Kashmir? One truly distinguishing feature of this state is the religious composition of its populace. This is the only state in the Republic where Muslims are in dominant majority. You could say that actual the number of Muslims living in at least half a dozen other of India is more than those living in the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir; that thirty times more Muslims live in the rest of India. And you would be right. There, however, is the distinguishing circumstance that ratio-wise this state is dominated by Muslims. So, does the state of Jammu and Kashmir need to have a special statue because it is a Muslim majority state? But, this is a secular state, here. India as well as the state of Jammu and Kashmir by virtue of its own constitution, are avowedly secular. And, would not, should not, call a particular state special, nor make one special on the consideration of religion. That would be irrational, iniquitous and biased. It would out-rightly refute the practice of equality which is the founding creed of the Indian Republic, besides being discriminatory to the other religions and people of the country. Why..., it would make India almost a theocratic state, in true imitation of Pakistan!

So what qualifies the state of J&K for a special status? Nothing. What justifies it? Nothing. Which facet demands a special treatment? None. And, what legitimizes the special status for J&K? on the other hand, a special status for J&K is an iniquitous deal in the Constitution of India. That deal though favorable to the people of the Jammu and Kashmir state discriminates against the people living in the rest of the 25 states and half a dozen UTs. Doesn't it make the constitution of India biased? And, the people of India un-equal among themselves? Pray ponder!

***

Will Autonomy solve anything?.....

It may be pertinent to ask for whom this autonomy, which has thrown the state machinery and mandarins into frenzy, is meant? Ladakh has already agitated against the 'greater autonomy' with the redoubtable Kushuk Bakula setting the stage for a total confrontation. Jammu though not exactly on a warpath yet, is quite agitated over the move with a the major parties of the region expressing their opposition to it. Even Kashmiris are not enthusiastic about it—their attitude at best, is that of an indifference. And, that is the lone segment in the state, which that is not opposed to the move for autonomy! Now 'not opposed' does not mean 'support', does it? And who does that leave as wanting, supporting, standing for the autonomy?

Other major groups in the Kashmir scene see autonomy as an NC bogey raised in time to scuttle the 'talks' and also to whip up sentiments for the future elections. Not that 'talks' are any big deal there, or sentiments all that fluid any no longer—witness the lukewarm response to the issue of autonomy itself!—but a politician would not be a politician if he does not cover all the tracts. In any case autonomy is an NC baby, bred and brought up by the party alone. The report was a party effort, the concerns—eh, that 53-removal of the late Sheikh from power! How hard it looms over the autonomy report!—yes, the concerns of the report are NC's cares and the party strength in the legislature is what this so-called 'state demand' will have to bank upon to see it through the house.

But would 'autonomy', apart from giving the ruling party a talking point, and perhaps a lever to manevour its nominee in the central cabinet to a higher slot, solve any of state's problems? That is the question which the whole state, and a billion Indians too, keep asking. Would it solve the problem of unemployment here? Would it speed up development and shore the shattered economy of the state? Would it get the gun out of Kashmir and bring the state peace to attend to its own cares? Would it ensure an efficient administration of the affairs to this luckless state? Would it remove discrimination within, seal fractures and usher in harmony? Would indifferent Kashmiris, with autonomy in their lap, live happily ever after?

For, it is not autonomy that Kashmir demands. It was not autonomy that the people, who ventured out in the last elections, voted for. It was not the promise of autonomy that brought the interregnum of peace, which saw Farooq elected to the CM's chair. If anything, autonomy is the addictive emotionalism that feeds a thousand grouses and sustains the militancy. Whosoever thinks that autonomy would lure Kashmir back to normalcy is looking for oil to douse a fire. For one thing, the Kashmiris who support militancy would see in autonomy, not a meeting ground for peace but, a vindication of the imaginary grouses that they have been feeding upon. For another, it would be seen as a victory of gun-power, one more 'step reached' in the 'long, hard journey'.

More than the content, it is the connotation carried by autonomy that has motivated its supporters. Those connotations come camouflaged as 'aspirations' and 'identities', rights and freedoms to dupe democratic bent. And, take it for a goodly ride to step towards the 'goals' in an ulterior path. That connotation is what the exploiters of autonomy seek to cash upon. That connotation makes autonomy a sinister proposition, which promises to further confound the issue instead of providing a possible solution to a vexing problem.

That, in fact, is how autonomy is actually being interpreted by the grass-root workers of the 'nationalist' NC itself. That was how the shrewd Beg had explained the Indira-Sheikh Accord to those very grass-root workers in the election of 1977... "this is one step towards the goal after we had been practically ousted from the Kashmir scene", he said giving his supporters a sound up-date upon that forgotten 'plebiscite' and romped home to power. It is with these emotional shots of 53-position, citizenship, article 370 and now autonomy that the political empires of Kashmir have been built. Political empires and terrorist battalions!

Yes, that is how Kashmir has been pushed step by step, stop after stop, into the lap of fundamentalist terrorism by the 'well meaning, secular nationalists'. Apart from providing sheaves of that psychological fodder to insurgency, autonomy shall solve nothing... can solve nothing. Efficient administration could help there; sincere governance too could go a long way in bringing Kashmir out of the rut. And, taking Kashmir off the drugs like autonomy could correct a lot of deviation there. If you wanted to cure Kashmir, that is!

***

Can article 370 be abrogated?

There can be no two opinions as to the fact that article 370 of Constitution of India confers upon Jammu and Kashmir state a special position in the Indian Union. By virtue of this provision J&K has a federal status vis-à-vis the Union. It has been given over-riding powers which the other states can never dream of. The state enjoys almost total legislative competence over all matters. The authority of the parliament has been drastically reduced. However, the issues of accession and the Fundamental Rights are outside the sphere of this article. Integration of the state with the union is defined by article 1 and the Ist schedule which includes the state in the territory of India. Fundamental Rights of the people of J&K derive form the article 10 of the Constitution of J&K which, significantly, is a short and seminal one stating: the permanent residents of the state shall have all the rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution of India.

Part of Constitution:

370 is one of the articles in part XXI of the Indian Constitution containing 'transitory and temporary provisions' spread over articles 369 and 392..Two of these articles 370 and 371 (A-I), deal with special provisions for different states; the former for J&K and the latter for ten other states. The articles themselves derive authority from article 2 of the Constitution which empowers the parliament to "admit" or establish new states on terms and conditions like those applying to J&K.

The article, however, by investing the state with extensive powers not enjoyed by other states, introduces an element of abnormality in an otherwise balanced constitution. From this stems as apprehension that the article may be abrogated. Indeed, there is a growing demand in the country to bring the state at par with other states.

Presidential Authority:

Power to abrogate the article 370 has been conferred upon the President by the article itself. Clause (3) of the article empowers the president to modify it or to cease its operation. The J&K High Court, as early as 1959, has held that the power to modify includes the power to extend its scope. This would also imply a power to reduce it. Thus the President, can increase or decease the extent of the article 370 or make it inoperative, by passing appropriate orders. A provision to the clause (3), however, stipulates that "recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State" is necessary for such orders. Thus though the President's power over the article 370 is accepted in principle its exercise is subject to acquiescence of the State.

Consent of the State.

It is perhaps not without significance that Constitution insists upon the concurrence of government of the State for the presidential order under clause (1) and that of Constituent Assembly of the State for clause (3). Dr Ambedkar has drawn a fine distinction between the Parliament and the Constituent Assembly of India. Parliament, he said, 'has an axe to grind' because it will be ruled by a party which would be impatient to push forth its agenda; the Constituent Assembly has no such motive. Therefore, what the assembly could do with a simple majority needs a 2/3rd majority in the parliament. Implicit in it, however, is the acceptance of parliament's constitutive power. A resolution of the State Assembly with an overwhelming majority may, in this light, have the effect of the stipulated recommendation. However, in absence of such a recommendation emanating from the state legislature, it would be difficult to change or abrogate the article 370.

Parliamentary power:

That brings us to unilateral abrogation of the article by the Parliament. Parliament does not figure in the Presidential power bestowed by the article 370, and in the present position unilateral abrogation is not possible. However, through the amending power of the parliament, under article 368 such an effect can be brought about, albeit in a prevaricated fashion. Parliament's amending power has become extensive after the 24th and 42nd amendments. This power has been upheld by the Supreme Court to extend to whole of the constitution, except the provison constituting the basic frame work of the constitution. Article 370 cannot be visualised as basic to the frame-work of Indian Constitution and would, therefore, be within the ambit of article 368.

Parliament Vs Legislature.

Apart from the rough-shod manner this procedure entails, the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 1954 specifies that "no such amendment (under article 368) shall have effect "without the agreement of the State Govt". It will never be easy for the Parliament to ignore this order of the President. Only circumstances of an extreme nature, threatening the integrity of the nation, may justify such an action. The conclusion that emerges from this analysis is that ordinarily it is not possible to change or abrogate the article 370 without the consent of the state.

Element of Imbalance.

As mentioned earlier, the article is an abnormality in an otherwise balanced constitutional document. In a union of 26 states, one state enjoys over-riding powers, while the remaining 25 states are subservient to the union government. Even after half a century of constitutional practice, the implications of this status are poorly appreciated. This is amply proved when sworn regionalists like Jyoti Basu and Badal, insist upon greater autonomy for the states including J&K, little realizing that J&K already enjoys more powers than a state in the federal USA does. It is inevitable that sooner or later, this realization shall dawn and when that happens there will be a clamor, either for curtailing the powers of this state or empowering the other states to a like extent, to the great detriment of the union.

A practical non-issue.

Article 370 cannot be abrogated without the consent of the state. The Centre for one thing is, and shall continue to be, loath to tinker with the position of the state in the prevalent circumstances and secondly, is constitutionally bound not to attempt it. This being so, both the alarmists harping on the preservation of the Article and those opposing it are wasting their rhetoric. The article stays because of the constitutional support and sooner this position is perceived the better. Centre state controversy is an ongoing debate, but there is no occasion to paint the union as an imperial force, dyed in a lighter hue. The union comprised of states and the total Indian populace, is as much representative of the country as any one state, if not better. It is probably, a hangover from the British days that forces us to see, greater and greater power, to this unit and that, as the ultimate freedom, when gross-root development should be the priority. The heat generated over article 370 is pointless: it cannot be abrogated easily without the acquiescence of the state nor does the forceable future present the possibility of a very radical action, that unilateral abrogation entails.

***

No rest for the Kashmir psyche.....

Right from that day in late twenties when Sir John landed in Kashmir with his cook Qadir, Kashmir psyche has known no rest. From those days when he made inflammatory speeches in mosques and private rooms to the most recent chanting by the newest autocrat on Pak sky Musharf, Kashmiri Muslim has been under constant barrage of psychic (or it is psychedelic?) bullets, goading him to higher 'achievements', 'truer' realization. Of course, with pledge of 'moral and material stilts.' Qadir's call for jehad culminated in the communal conflagration of 1931. Pakistan's 'moral and material support' have cost Kashmir a deathly dance for ten years. And now, the Kashmiri is not to be held accountable for any of this because his noble psyche was, and has been, unsettled by these sinister callers!

The intervening decades echoed those calls, in continuity, keeping their target group on tenterhooks till the overt participatory action by Pakistan, in the late eighties, finally precipitated a terrorist siege in which the valley with its populace was caught. The people decried communalism, even turned their Conference National, but kept celebrating a communal carnage as an opening for 'freedom'. That freedom is yet part to be achieved, said Sheikh Abdullah, even through his first tenure as the chief of a free Kashmir. That freedom, informs, Musharaf today, is the 'goal' that Pakistan would 'help' Kashmiris to attain at any cost. That 'freedom' is communalism in its blackest shade, if you like plain speak.

It is said that politicians local, and national foreign, have their own personal and national axes to grind in that fire. And they, therefore, would never let those ambers cool. If the local one's spring bills and resolutions, autonomies and devolutions to keep those confusions akindle, the foreigners add *josh* and *jehad* to feed those flames. You have other sooth-sayers, ready to cite scheme and strategy to support their contentions that it is all the handi-work of the super power(s) Sure, the Supers have their power to consider, the foreigners have national ambitions while the locals have personal ends to cater to. And, all along, these contentions have served to absolve the common Kashmiri of every responsibility. But, does the Kashmiri have nothing to answer for his turbulent psyche or the tremulous predispositions?

General Kashmiri populace remained cool to the hot debate over autonomy, the reason cited was that it was 'impossible to achieve' not that it was an undesirable ruse of a politician. In early nineties, when militancy was at its peak, the genteel voices would say 'let lord do the best.' And, shew their innocence. Today, when the terrorist and the security forces are on an equal poise, that genteel voice cries out for being 'ground between the militants and the military.' In mid nineties, when *Ikhwanis* had the upper hand that genteel folk-hood collected all the credit saying that it was people's disenchatment with militants that did it.

And, of course, you have had grim silence over every militant strike and a hot hartal on each lapse by security forces. You still have them, and 'explain' the silences as reflection of terror while the hartal is excused as a democratic excercise. That is, when you have nothing to paint it as indignant rage! Are these demonstrations pure Pure souls speaking the truth or prevarications promoting agendas in carefully worked out designs? Is there a populace that is innately innocent or one initimately involved yet innovative enough to escape accountability every time?

Many people take it evidence of a much developed political consciousness. But don't things political imply an essential secular calling that would not be tethered to considerations of faith and crusading brethren? From Qadir's calls to Shiekh's refusal to sever the religious umbilicus by giving up headship of *Auquaf*, on to the resounding cries of jehadis you have a regular religious pivot to Kashmir conundrum. More than a political consciousness it comes through as a religious polarization. Fit it and see how everything falls in place, from 13 July as the martyr's day to the obsequies at the martyrs' yard on to the raging disquiet. And pray, who could you blame for that? Probably, the exploiting mullahs who have systematically unsettled the noble psyches.

Again, you would not be blaming the local clerics but the immigrant Iranian and Turanians - Syeds and their ilk - who are supposed to have thus done the Kashmiris in. Not today, not yesterday but over the past centuries - the centuries of dark medieval times when Kashmir was as tumultous as it is now. Did one hear you wishing : if only those jarring discordances could be kept out? Well, well you are on the right tract of doling out absolvements that have written restivity into this psyche in the first place. Go ahead, you are in the high league of the great obfuscators of all times!

***

'Re-organization' call the cat by its colour!.....

History, like life, carries the disability that its alternatives can never be tested. You have an option, you make a choice and the other path 'in the wood' is closed forever. It could have been good, even better but you never know. It could have been a total disaster, too. Those who make their decisions post facto can work virtues into the paths not taken. They could be right. They could be horribly wrong. Nehru's choice in Kashmir has not worked out well. Nor has his UNO fling borne any fruit. Would Patel's choice have helped? Perhaps. Perhaps not. We simply don't know. Hyderabad was a different fish, altogether. So was Junagrah. So were the other five hundred and odd states. But Kashmir was different. The difference lay in its Muslim majority character. And, that has 'made all the difference'. It still makes Kashmir different.

Kashmir is still a Muslim majority state. The state of Jammu and Kashmir' that is. The so-called 'freedom movement' was, in fact and effect, a Muslim movement. It was not against a kingship, but against a Hindu-kingship. The Qadir episode, Reading Rooms, Glancy Commission, the July uprising... all were communal striations. The alternate choice of 'nationalism' was a patchwork compromise that never got thorough acceptance. From the day one of Independence, communalism or the religious character of the government, the ruling NC and the majority population became quite apparent. Sheikh Abdullah's different tones in Kashmir, Hazratbal reiteration (so revealingly lyricised by Mahjoor), plebiscite, even the

1975 Accord and its aftermath right up to the recent Autonomy Resolution, not to speak of Land Reform Acts, Delimitation Commissions, organization of the state machinery...all attest to this communal character and agenda. Perhaps, 'communal character overlaid with personal ambitions' would be a better characterization, but it was nothing more. Is nothing more!

But the Indian nationalists were anxious to have a secular alias. They got it in the nomenclature of National Conference. They wanted a Muslim to confirm their credentials and got Sheikh Abdullah. Nobody has paused for a moment to consider that that compromise meant a tacit acceptance of the Two-Nation Theory. Kashmir got its two-nation essence in a secular wrapper and the secularists of India got a pretence to live by. Fifty-three years ago communalism was misnamed secularism. Today the people who have seen that camouflage green in its fang are still wary of calling it by its name. The deception that Nehru sought and got is still being passed around in the name of regional autonomy, or a demand for the re-organization of the state.

Does Jammu have a grievance? Yes. Does Ladakh (Leh that is) have a just grouse? Yes. Are these rooted in a regional bias? Well, well... think again. Suppose Jammu had been overwhelmingly Muslim, as Kashmir is. Would in that case the constitutional machinery—the apportioning of Assembly seats, districts, tehsils, employment's and allocations—have been so clearly titled in favour of Kashmir? Would there have been glaring discriminations? Would there have been a demand for re-organization of the state, then? Possibly. As it is there is a rural/urban divide even in today's totally Muslim Kashmir. There are dissentions in Pakistan, too. And, of course, there is the instance of Bangladesh.

But, tarry. That is a different... qualitatively different thing. Bangladesh is a Muslim State today. Even Sheikh Hassina, the original Bangabandu's daughter has to take—or, takes?—an anti-India stance. Sale of Bangladesh gas was just a small instance. You may have four states for a Pakistan, but that would be four theocracies there. One does not know whether it is Islam that does this to people, but one would certainly like to know what does it? Yes, what does make Doda, Poonch and Rajouri, and.... (eh, there is no escaping the truth!) Muslim majority villages in Bani and Billawar, hot beds of Militancy, following in the footsteps of Kashmir? Or, take a different reality check (take them, for you'd need lots). Before 1977, even Kashmir returned Congress because Sheikh was in jail. (What type of congress it was would need more reality checks, eh!) In the very first election when Sheikh Abdullah, of plebiscite and Kashmiriat, entered the fray, the Muslim majority belts in Jammu (and Ladakh) quietly duplicated the mood and bent of the Valley. Why didn't these fringes vote against the Kashmir currents? Even in 1983, when Jammu voted en bloc for India and Indira, these areas went with Farooq and Kashmir. So in the next, and next, till the militancy made it one with Kashmir in the dance of death. There may be a Handoo there, a Salathia here, a Bhat there, a Bali here, but the current is clear as to where it flows. Mis-read it at your risk; ignore it at your own peril.

This cat has communal colour, the colour of Muslim communalism. Plain and simple. Farooq rides it to power, the Hurriyat rides it, Mufti Syed of soft face and democratic pretence is trying to ride it. It has nothing to do with regionalism. For it is out and out a sectarian thing. Why Autonomy? Because, said the learned legislators of the secular National Conference on the floor of the house, a Muslim majority cannot be happy with an Indian dispensation. Hindu India, they call it and work with that conviction in mind. Indians are anxious to give it a more soothing name and miss-call it 'secularism with regional aspirations'. Okay, says the thing, that is fine with us but we are what we are, so give us what we want. Salahudin wants it with a gun in hand, Hurriyat wants it with diplomatic intercession, and Farrooq wants it in a 'democratic way'. Because, all the people there want it, right?

But India wants to get deeper into its own network of confusion. Jammu, shy of speaking the truth wraps it in the regional foil. Ladakhis do some plain speaking, but only some. None wants to call this cat by its colour for the same considerations, which made Nehru turn over Jammu and Kashmir. For a pretence. It may never be possible to know what the alternative course of history would mean. But the least we can do is call a spade... a spade... call a spade, a cat back when it is indistinguishable from the darkest night.

***

Narrowly liberal; halfway secular !.....

It is a sad fact that most of the liberalists, democrats, scientists, sociologists and even poets here are halfway people. They learn evolution—biological and social—for clearing the exams without acknowledging its implications in their belief schemes. They opine that society is an elemental thing without admitting that they themselves are living contradictions of it. There is faith-ly loyalty hiding under the façade of secularism, a dogged devotion to tradition living under a veneer of liberalism and a patent conformism in the revolutionaries. They quote Sartre without thinking of the essential bohemianism ingrained in the scheme that rejected entire social order beginning with the family. One here is not talking of the skepticism that may come after a full-blooded doubting. Thus, for example, postmodernism admits belief and concedes the truth of variegation after having passed through a drill of modernism that blasted belief and swore by uniformity and elementalism. But people here see it more as a late admission of their old beliefs by what they often call the 'scientific' world.

Why? Because people here have not gone the whole hog. One remembers a classical quote from the congressman and famed Urdu poet, a committed leftist, freedom fighter and member of Constituent Assembly, Hasrat Mohani, who on being told way back in the 1930s, that the then USSR had occupied another of Central Asian Muslim states remarked that it 'would give Muslims a majority within the communist fold'. So the workers were not unqualified 'workers' but 'Muslim workers'! To be fair others have not ceased maintaining particular communal or religious angles even when they chanted the 'mighty democracy' or 'workers ...unite' slogans. Thus when Harikrishan Singh Surjit came here in 1997 to beg Farooq Abdullah to give a Rajya Sabha berth to S S Ramoovalia he may not have been pushing a communal angle but the connotation could hardly be denied. Or, witness Tarigami of the CPM talking in strange, un-communist slang when raising issues about Kashmir. He, for example, has little sympathy for the Wazir Commission Report which his ideological brothers in Jammu see as The means to get the workers and peasants of this part a fairer deal.

So is his stand on Article 370 and Autonomy. Often the stances are indistinguishable from the agenda of say, National Conference in its most Kashmir-Muslim-centric days. Then, the Sheikh insisted upon and got a special status for Kashmir without taking the wishes and views of the other regions into consideration. Indeed, whenever there is talk of extending the special treatments to other regions and peoples of the state the NC gets awfully squeamish. They may hold rallies here, laud the support of the people here, but talk of as innocuous a thing as a Regional Council and a rash of irritation erupts. From 1950s to early 1970s the leaders who latter came to rule this state under National Conference talked of a veiled secessionism. *Raishumari* to referendum to secessionism is just a graded tourney. Many analysts believe that the seeds of the present turmoil in the state were sown by that very leadership by its incessant chant of *izzat* and *aabroo*, and calls of *azadi* to free Kashmiris from Indian *gulami*. The state visited this stance afresh when the previous assembly debated and passed the Autonomy Resolution.

Less than a year after the late Sheikh had 'proven' his secular credentials in transforming his Muslim Conference into National Conference he uttered the gem that 'Islam was the sun and all other religions were mere stars in comparison'. That was 1939. When confronted by his non-Muslim members in an NC executive meet later, he gave them the other gem that 'non-Muslims could only live as *Zimmis* in a Muslim majority state'. Sixty-three years later his family has changed much. It is now proven progressive and secular with equanimity about religion and relations. Omar's marriage to a non-Muslim girl is testimony to that. But that testimony too is only halfway. For the same Omar does not seem to have been happy over his sister's marriage to late Rajesh Pilot's son Sachin. Farooq Abdullah's marriage to a Christian lady is okay. Omar's marriage to a Hindu girl is a gain. But Sarah wedding Sachin isn't to be countenanced. Is it a gender bias or a meander through narrow lanes of religious paranoia? While a person as much as a family is entitled to private beliefs and likes, it brings pious secular and liberal postures under a shade of doubt.

And when one remembers that all through its rule, the National Conference actively, banked on religion and its symbols and connotations the things become deviations. Soon after independence Sheikh was advised to dissociate himself from the Muslim Aukaf Trust. Of course, he didn't. His most concerned correspondence during the twenty-two years of his imprisonment was regarding the construction plans of the *Aukaf* and *Dargah*. Last year when the government took it away from the Sheikh family, NC accused the government and PDP of trying to kill the family's political clout. Would it be churlish to refer to the pronounced green worn, without fail, by the president of the secular ruling party PDP?

Would one be cynical if one referred to Hurriyat chief Abbas Ansari claiming in a recent interview with Srinagar weekly Chattan that he tried his best to get all his Muslim friends to Delhi talks after a proper Muslim manner, as a devout Muslim ought to? Are we talking of rights or communities here, being secular or religious in all this, transcending the narrow barriers or barricading our thoughts? Often freedom, democracy, secularism and liberalism are mere garbs here, worn to make oneself a little intellectual-friendly, when in fact we are communal, conformist, religious and illiberal to bone! Nay?

***

Yaar wafadar ik nazar idhar bhi!.....

'*Chor ki dhadi main tinka*' goes the famous saying. Every thief down the ages has vouchsafed the veracity of this saying with his act and being. Punjab remained in the terrorist conflagration for one and a half decades. Thousands were killed. Countless people were maimed, thousands were uprooted... factories, shops, houses... whole localities were vandalized. All the two crore people of the state lived in the vice like grip of terrorism. Yet, neither Longowl, nor Barnala, nor Badal felt the need to reiterate their Indianness even once, before, during or after the havoc. In contrast, the leaders of J&K, Kashmir that is, have always felt a compulsive urge to declare their and the state's unwavering commitment to the Indian union'. Strange that you should need to chant 'India'. Why is Indianness often brought in to shroud the fact of the accession of the state unless there is the proverbial straw sticking out from the beard?

Insistent assertions are, only the most obvious instance of this... shall we say 'guilty conscience'? Accessions may be in the cloud of uncertainty untill they are negotiated, settled, but once an accession is accomplished it becomes an indissoluble finality. Yes, once for all. It is not a contract contingent upon conditions, nor can it be opened at will or whim. Once acceded is never to secede. That is the law that guides the nations of this world in their integrity and sovereignty. J&K's accession to India is a legal finality that has been accomplished in keeping with the procedure laid down for the purpose. That procedure did not need the approval or agreement of the then undisputed leader of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah. As he says in his autobiography it, however, was the Sheikh himself who went around Delhi getting India to agree to Maharaja Harisingh's request of accession. And, the state of J&K acceded to India. Once for all. Finis?

Unfortunately for the people, it has never been 'finises' for the politicians of Kashmir. Though they did not impinge upon the legal position, the utterings of the successive leaders of Kashmir beginning with the Sheikh himself, have given the people of that part to understand that accession of the state was a 'temporary arrangement', a stop-gap sort of thing 'for the time being'... to tide over the onslought from Pakistan in the garb of Tribal Raid. Now it can't be said that those great leaders were ignoramii: they were accomplished legal minds and people with more caliber as well as acumen than may ever be produced there-from again. Yet they fed the people incorrect illegalities and created clouds of doubt in the minds of the common folks regarding the position of accession. It may have served some temporary, timely interest but it was a misleading act. It was the beginning of the vicious circle of untruths. Once you sow a doubt, you have to grow more dubious to keep the crop. So, imaginative contrivances were invented to suggest that these formed the contingent conditions: 370, Delhi Agreement, Presidential Orders, Accords, 'commitments and promises'...

The suggestion that was given currency was that accession was conditional—conditional to the fulfillment of these conditions. Eminent legalists of this state, for example, call the article 370 'a link' of the state to Indian Union giving the people the false impression that this temporary provision is where the accession of this state to

India is hinged. Accordingly—in religious adherence to this falsehood—the 'autonomy report' demands that the word 'temporary' be removed from the chapter heading! Now, the worthies know that they are talking trash, but the common man banking upon their legal expertise equates this falsehood with the true position about accession. And the result is that even intelligent people start speaking of 370 as 'a vital link', as if the accession will fall apart if this article is removed. Article 370 is simply a provision relating to the division of powers between this state and the Union. The same article goes into 370 A, B, C, and D…M parts, specifying similar arrangements applicable to a number of other states. It has got nothing to do with accession. Nor have any of the other arrangements, agreements, and accords or promises any bearing upon the accession.

They are all arrangement, which may be enlarged, curtailed, curbed or continued with mutual consent. There is, as Sheikh Abdullah once said, 'nothing sacred about article 370'. The same goes for autonomy. Autonomy is not a condition for accession. Autonomy is a mutual arrangement. It can be there between any or any number of states and the Union. It may of greater or lesser extent. Of course, there is nothing wrong per se with a demand for autonomy. Indeed, there is a general demand for greater autonomy for all states. But, that has no effect... shall have no effect, can have no effect... upon the accession of any of these states to the Union. Any averagely educated person is aware of this position, yet respectable members of the state cabinet are positing autonomy as a condition of sorts for the continued accession of the state to Indian Union! You could laugh at this inaptitude, had it been inaptitude plain and simple. Unfortunately it is more sinister, craftier than the subtlety of a cyber-thief.

And there, you need the greater circumspection of love and loyalty. Where exactly do you land, when you promote the incorrect idea that accession is an open option? That the mutual arrangements are something very vital to the integration of the state to the Union? That Article 370 is the *izzat* of a Kashmiri, the *aabro* of every woman there? It becomes ridiculous when the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and Election Commissioner get spoken of as curbs to the autonomy and development. What exactly is wanted: blanket powers like those usurped by the dictator across the border with judiciary and legislature made subservient to his interest? Autonomy, are you speaking of? No state interest is being helped here; no nationalism is being fostered in this. Instead, it gives false, untrue, unjustified wind to the destabilizing plane of terrorism. Desist, if ye art true, as thou profess!

***

Yes, why?.....

The lead editorial the other day in prestigious Dawn, the paper founded by Jinnah himself, commenting on 'the missing enthusiasm' for the October election among the Pak people asked in a sad melancholy...'why it should have been Pakistan's lot to have had a long succession of rulers who have let it down again and again'? It went on to tell how this list contained leaders as well as the generals. It, indeed, has been the sad fate of the people there to be led up one primrose path of daliant deviation after another, and never to be taken to that promise, which its leaders so gullibly made. Probably, the prestigious Dawn took no note when Faiz alluded to this 'let down' in his famous '*yeh daag daag ujhala, yeh shab guzeeda sahar...*' a quarter century ago. But Faiz was a poet and a preceptor; he would have seen the coming times clearly when the other opinions still allowed themselves to be deluded by this dulcet note and that. He had also seen the inside of most Pak jails where he spent long years for questioning the lullabies of those dulcet notes. Probably, the popular mind needs more grotesque example to see the truth. And today, Pakistan has enough of these monstrities straddling it to be missed by even the most colour-blind commentator.

It, indeed, comes as a near shock that a people should look to a usurping general for a restoration of law that he trounced under his Military boots. Yet such has been the 'lot' of the people there that they have been the condemned to look to those trampling feet for dignity and honour, rights and law. Not once but time and again.

Ayub came on the same promise and installed himself as the final law and authority. Zia rode the back of a discredited Bhutto and made a king of him. And, so did Musharraf. Every time the people, welcomed them and believed that they would succor them. Every time they supported the lawless in the hope that they would bring them law. It is futile to point out that their lot was sealed by that very hope. For that should have been amply clear when the third dictator took over with the promise the first had made and confounded. Somehow that point is not registered and instead the people, the promises and opinions there, wallow in the deviations, deceptions and delusions that are piled upon them. The people who are asking 'whys' today were the one who hailed the newest deviously, deceives the world opinion. They'd go support him if he gains a lee way on the core issues. And, that condemns Pakistan to hopelessness, lastingly.

***

Enter the 'full' President!.....

The chief executor of Pak destiny, personally .... in all 'sincerity'... felt he had to be the 'president 'and pronto, he became one .As simple as that! The most 'difficult step' was taken so easily that one is left wondering why it was considered difficult at all. Probably, it was difficult for the ousted president, just as the initial take over had been difficult for the overthrown premier, not for the general, not for the people of "Land of the Pure". Obviously, those personages were not so sincere not so personal in their aspirations or else their wishes too would have remained steady horses underneath them. For doesn't the faith decree that the God would stand firmly on the side of the sincere and true (believers, that is). Apparently democracy, being a political game to the core, does not merit, and doesn't get, the support of the Omniscient One. And, therefore, frequently flounders!

So the person who comes to parley with Vajpayee next month is not a mere martinet but the full president of the Islamic of Republic Pakistan. 'Full president' because he combines in himself the personae of the President of the realm, the Chief Executive of his own (un-) Constitutional Order, the Chief of his Staff and the Chairman of the Chiefs as well. Indeed, he is the most powerfully designated President, Pakistan has ever had. Even Jinnah had stopped at combining only the offices of the President of the assembly and presidency of his party with his Governor General's mantle. How opportune than Vajpayee got both his knees 'ironed' ahead of the proposed summit! Especially when, everybody from the Pak establishment to the international media is insisting that the newest coup is to give the general more legitimacy in his interlocutions with Indian leaders.

God knows he needs every bit of it! Technically , the general who took the reign of *Mumlikat-I- Khudadad* in his own hands from air, in that October—evening of 1999, was no more the General, nor the Chief of Army, nor anything. He stood dismissed, yet succeeded in reinstalling himself and dismissing everybody else, the Army Chief, PM and, now, the President too. All illegimately unless, following the logic of two negatives crossing each other out, his earlier illegitimacy has been cancelled out by this latest one. Yes, it is quite possible that they, in the country 'bestowed-of-God', do use that queer mathematics. They, for one, believe in a different democracy- the so called Islamic Democracy, which does not accept the model of popular mandate, established conventions or the rule by the laid down law.

All over the half a century of its life, Pakistan has shown that it does not practice the democratic norms. There are very vocal and well-regarded notions that call the democratic conventions haram. So the newest turn in the Pak internal affairs may actually get to be recognized as legitimate after all. Musharaf can easily ride the Islamic baton, making a second Zia of himself. And India, in twists that irony so fondly takes here, may become the vehicle to take him there. For legitimacies and illegitimacies don't matter much in the dispensation they favour there. 'Sincerities 'and services in the cause of Islam do. General ….err, President Musharraf says that he all is 'sincerity'. So he has just to add the 'service' and before the Taj has seen that next moon, you may have a 'very strong' Musharraf ruling the roost in the realm of the pure, faithfully.

That, contrary to all 'learned' perceptions of the Summit being a meeting place of the moderated minds – remember the Musharraf's call to Vajpayee on the need to tone down the rhetoric in preparation for the summit – may actually see the Pak side taking a very hard line at Agra. It was his execution of the Kargil incursion that actually staunched the opposition to his initial take-over act. A tough stance at Agra would secure for his full take-over the firm support of the Islamists there. And, you can count few out in Pakistan, when it comes to faith, in which ever interpretation. In a way Agra Summit is a God-given opportunity for the general to consolidate his hold. The first step is already taken. With the second at Agra the weak Musharraf may return as a strong head for his country!

In the early years of Islam, when Hussain was cornered by Yazid's forces at Karbala, he asked his opponents to accede to one of the three options : Let me return to Mecca; escort me direct to Yazid in Damascus; allow me to go out to the *kafir* lands to die waging jihad. That tradition continues to be live and robust. For all the fond fictions of a subverted democracy, an oppressed and exploited people, Pakistan is a crusader for faith and ravels in that role. The people there may need creature comforts— in fact, do cry and clamour for them – but the path to the prosperity and development as also a proper rule for the country is that of common democracy. But, for the disposition there, the democratic constructs are as unreal as conventions of democracy are considered irrelevant.

That disposition does not accept the tenets of democracy, nor adheres to the conventions that usually go with it. Leaderships there are more often thrust upon the people, not thrown up by them.

And, India remains the touchstone against which every worth must be tested. As Benazir informs us, every leader who 'ventures to hold talks with India' becomes a traitor. And, here is a general who stands in an even greater need of earning the approval back home than kudos from outsiders. Remember, he has job to do. The 'job' of presidenting Pakistan. 'Personally'. God save the peace that is yet to be. Or, would He, given that it all is being done for His glory?

***

The baseline remains unchanged!.....

Terrorism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir began the day Pakistan declared its 'moral, political and diplomatic support' for the insurgency in Kashmir. Of course, that declaration had been preceded by a carefully laid scheme by Pakistan where saboteurs were taken up, trained in the black art of terrorism and sent back to disrupt a peaceful state. Before that Pakistan had been similarly active in Punjab for nearly a decade. There too, terrorists were sent in after training in the Pak camps, with an appropriately democratic apology to cover the Pak intents. Pakistan there wanted to kill many birds with one stone the most important point being that religion was the only basis for nationalism here. Nor was the attempt the first Pakistani effort to wage a camouflaged war in Kashmir for its interests. It had tried to do that in sixties too. It has imposed at least two wars on India for the purpose of grabbing Kashmir. And failed. But after a few years in Afghanistan, Pakistan felt it had built enough international insensitivity to stoke a similar offensive in Kashmir. Aparently it had. The world went into silence over a clear proxy war. And, America, focused on throwing communism out of Afghanistan, and possibly trying to compensate Pakistan for the 'help' in Afghanistan, conveniently looked the other way.

Meanwhile, Pakistan set up camps, trained men and sent them to start a 'struggle for the Kashmiri people'. It was only logical that the Pak state should be fending for its 'soldiers fighting' in Kashmir. So it declared 'moral, political and diplomatic support' for the fighters in Kashmir. The Pak army was actively involved as it recruited them and sent them across under the cover of cross-border firing or through their smuggling and spy-rings. At the most critical juncture the Pak army led by its general, who now is the President, came out into the open to fight the Indians on the hills of Kargil. Thwarted and finding the costs too heavy and implications of a direct confrontation too unmanageable, Pak soldiery retreated from active participation. But, the involvement continued now in an enhanced manner. Of course, by now the instrument of interference had been perfected and they also had the Al Qaida terrorists lending a helping hand. When the *Fidayeen* attacks began last year, Pak drummers were raising a clearly victorious din. The 'moral, political and diplomatic support' was at its highest!

Pak government media not only had significant sections devoted to the '*jihad* and *shaheeds*' in Kashmir but were actually simulating the 'fight', filming it in their studios and showing it on their television screens, to make clear what the 'political support' meant. Throughout Pakistan collection drives were openly launched to finance the 'war' in Kashmir. That was the 'moral support' Pakistan had pledged to render. The whole fifty years of Pak history is one uninterrupted effort to garner diplomatic support for their objectives of capturing the territory of Kashmir. It is not hard to see that the moral and political support for the 'cause in Kashmir' is the major reason for the rise of terrorism in Pakistan. Ever since its existence Pakistan had been rearing to grab Kashmir. When open confrontation failed, it tried duplicity and deceit. At its pinnacle it developed into the devilry of terrorism and terrorism became a state policy there. That state policy was called the 'moral, political and diplomatic support' for the 'struggle in Kashmir' and Pakistan actually put its nation on hold for realization of that policy.

Today when a 'hounded' Musharraf tries to lull the world-wide criticism of the Pak state as a foster-mother of terrorism, by an apparent change of tract on terrorism, he takes care to preserve that baseline of the Pak state by reiterating what had been the unstated Pak policy for forty years and open declared policy for the last twelve years. The germ of terrorism has been this immoral, impolitic, illegal support of the Pak state. Though Pakistan does call itself a 'democratic' country, it has never been one, has never believed in the tenets of democracy, nor practiced them; the Pak state does not believe that democratic rights are what its citizens, or any citizens for that matter, should have. Nawaz Sheriff was busy implementing a Shariat Law when he was ousted, and Musharraf was very near imposing one when the terrorism caught up with him. Yet 'democratic rights of the people of Kashmir' is the plea on which the Pak state justifies her illegal interference in Kashmir.

The very state of Pakistan was created to denounce all identities—ethnic, cultural, local… all Pakistan stood for one single Muslim identity alone. Yet the concern for the 'identity of Kashmiris' is the other stated reason why Pakistan is 'morally' pledged to support insurgency in Kashmir. They, who are yet to come to terms with the concept of identity in the scheme of two nation theory, and within the failed state of Pakistan, never miss an opportunity for calling attention to this identity of Kashmir. From beards, *burqas* and Mullaish *bandobast*, the Kashmiris have, over the past several years, seen enough of what identity was being sought to be imposed upon them. Yet, after having broken a duly concluded stand-still agreement with the erstwhile Maharaja and invaded a territory that neither historically, nor 'legally, nor culturally, nor politically could be a part of the new state of Pakistan. Pakistan has actually been invoking a 'legal right' to the state, its people and territories to justify that unjustifiable support. Now how do you make a good a claim that has neither legal, nor moral, nor political nor social backing? With terrorism, what else?

Terrorism is one 'reason' that makes all claims good by intimidation, devastation and its brute negation of all morals, justifications or principles. In fact, the reasons for Pakistan sliding into the mire of terrorism lies in its illogical, unjust claim on Kashmir. Illegally, immorally Kashmir has been injected into 'Pak blood' and the whole body there has become sick. Terrorism is a symptom of that sickness. If Musharraf really wants to purge his Pakistan of the infection he should cure that sick base. That baseline bred the last terrorism; it would breed more, even if the present one in somehow contained.

***

The dimwits lose another non-battle, Needlessly!.....

Strange though it is, the logic of a realistic Pakistan policy has not dawned upon the people who once stood for a reality vision of the Pak intransigence. It is just over a year since Advani spoke of 'a proactive' policy and already the BJP government wrapped itself in a most illogical confusion about Pakistan. From Vajpayee's exertions at the Durban Common Wealth Summit getting the military rulers roundly condemned to the refusal to talk to the military dictator, on to the hard exertions aimed to prevent Clinton form visiting Pakistan, India has been following a path that in no way buttresses the Indian case. In fact the logic of the Indian argument impinges upon the Indian stand quite unfavourably.

Take the pitch for 'restoration of democracy' in Pakistan. Good even pious, but horrowingly unrealistic. Why, it is positively inimical to the Indian interest! Wasn't it the democratically elected Nawaz who deceived Vajpayee in Lahore? Wasn't it the same democratic PM who took the peace lorry to Kargil? For India it makes no difference whether a democrat or a dictator sits at the helm of affairs there—either of them is equally committed to an anti-India stand. Here the wisdom of Vajpayee government raising hell over the 'restoration of democracy' in Pakistan becomes a virtual fallacy for it carries an implied endorsement of the actions and postures of the elected government. Do Vajpayee and his government agree with that?

Certainly not, but that is what the noise over democracy boils down to. By harping on the restoration-crap, India is only lending credence to the Pak stand, albeit indirectly. All the countries who side with India today on the restoration issue like, for example, the countries that condemned Pakistan at Durban, should by the very logic be more favourably disposed towards Pakistan tomorrow if a democratically elected government is given control. The slim logic of 'maintaining a hold' on Pakistan that shall take Clinton there next week shall be called 'strengthening the democratic elements' and would become a strong reason for supporting the Pak stand. That is the simple logic and anybody who is not a dimwit should be able to see that it goes against the Indian interest.

This restoration of democracy bit has another; one may say unsavory, side-to it. It imposes, upon the whole gamut of Indo-pak relations, the fiction that the belligerence against India stems from the military alone. Indian intelligentsia suffers from a similar delusion, though their bad-boys include the politicians as well. Both the factious understandings leave the real fonts of India-baiting i.e. the people, blameless. Now, do the fervent jehadis want peace with India? Does Nawaz Sherif's Muslim League want peace with India? Do the supporters of that vintage India-baiter Zulfiquar Ali Bhutoo stand for a peaceful co-existence with India? Does the Jamat-I-Islami, and a dozen other outfits surviving on anti-India sentiments, stand for a peaceful co-existence with India? Where in Pakistan does that votary of peace live?

Certainly not in the face of fact that any democrat as well as any dictator there can survive so long as he paints himself as a blue-blooded jehadi. And gets doomed the moment he/she is perceived a moderate or slightly luke-warm to the cause of 'waging war' upon India. Nawaz rode that tiger and trounced Benazir, but lost his favour after the debacle at Kargil. That was his undoing and that of democracy. That was the rise of military, too. Generals, politicians or the people: it is one long spectrum with very slight difference of shades. Yet, India not only persists with the fiction of differing views but also offers this illogicality as an explanation for their continued intractability. Pakistan is exonerated and India ends up undoing her own case.

A similar illogicality occasioned the needless noise India raised on the issue of Clinton visiting Pakistan. Had the visit been opposed on the ground of Pak sponsorship of terrorism in India and abroad, there would have been logic for the Indian demand. Had it been insisted that Clinton should not visit a virtual rogue state and a crass violator of the principle of peaceful co-existence and international law it would have been, at least, understandable. Instead, India built a case on the same 'restoration' ne-sense. Democracy or dictatorship that is an internal affair of Pakistan as the frequent usurpers have as frequently argued.

And, visiting or not visiting Pakistan is a choice of the US president and his constituents. It is for the Americans to think whether their President should hop over and hold parleys with the newest dictator in a world sworn to democracy and freedom. It is for them to see how that hop would reflect upon their nation's commitment to the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It certainly was for their think tanks to chew this bitter cud and see how noxious it got. It certainly was not an issue for India. Nor a concern. But the government of India succeeded in converting an American concern into a battle of sorts for Indian foreign policy effort and to ultimately. Again, lose needlessly.

Suppose Clinton had decided against visiting Pakistan. All it would have meant was that the US president refused to give any recognition to a military usurper. It would have had no bearing upon the Indo-Pak equation vis-à-vis USA. Now that the US president has decided to go to Pakistan it means a rejection of the Indian stand on so many related things, besides a rebuttal of the restoration-hype. India could have spared herself the diplomatic effort as well as the embarrassment. She could have saved herself the loss of a battle that never was. But then, you can always trust the dimwits here to rush into slushy mire with feet firmly in their mouths!

***

Is Pakistan courting absurdity?.....

Whether the state originated in a social contract or not, democracy derives its existence from an agreed consensus among the various sections of people, as also amongst the different wings of the state to observe a resolved set of regulations. In this resolution is rooted the power of a democratic polity. It guarantees the easeful existence of the institutions ensuring a democratic rule. Democracy, though besotted with ills, has reverence for institutions and conventions and promotes a healthy competition among its branches, all geared to uphold the basic tenet of co-existence. The moment debate becomes a disputation and competition degrades to contentious strife, the spirit of democracy vanishes leaving anarchy in its wake, as Polybius so painstakingly detailed twenty hundred years ago. Polybius also noted that democracy ultimately flows into anarchy in its natural course which underscores a further need for practising democracies to be cautious. If the events unfolding in Pakistan speak of a democracy on its evanescent course even before it was properly birthed, the recent developments within India are but the symptoms of a robust democracy in action.

Different practice:

It can hardly be contended that these two sub-continental neighbors stand on any footing of equality, democracy-wise. History, like a woman's reputation, shows a relentless tenacity to haunt its subjects. Pakistan was created to feed one man's obsession; it has remained pegged to individuals. India's is a matured polity that has abided by the tenants of its democratic contract over half a century. The roots are deep, the conventions have been smoothly laid and respect for law is a rule not an exception. The democratic conventions have, long since, come out of their teething troubles and have perfected the instruments that vouchsafe their harmonious interaction. If the presence of a comprehensive constitutional document, foreseeing most of the eventualities, has enabled India to adapt to the practice of the democratic mode, the transparency enshrined in the polity has eased the evolution of a smooth mechanism for governing of the country. Even so, a democracy can withstand only so much of mis-use; cross the limit and the whole skein comes unstrung.

A fluid reality :

Democracy without the institutional framework is a tangled web; nobody knows where he stands nor where the others stand. Some years ago, when Benazir Bhutto, (who was the Prime Minister, then) expressed her ignorance about the exact stage of nuclear development her country was in, many believed her, because the polity there is devious enough to leave the PM ignorant, even innocent of its mechanisations! At another time, she frankly admitted her inability to control and curb the terrorist instigation being conducted from Pakistani soil; nobody said she was feigning. The Pak Prime Minister is not the all-knowing, all-powerful, chief executive democratic theory postulates him or her to be. Even after half a dozen constitutions, abrogations and modifications, the maze called Pak polity is not fully traversed. The powers of President, the Prime Minister, the Parliament and the Chief Justice, the army chiefs... all remain in a fluid indetermination, shifting with the clout and carriage of incumbent. Within the army the equations shift and shuffle; nor is the position of Inter-services Intelligence, ISI, within the army or even vis-à-vis other agencies, clear. Every-where it is the person in-charge who matter not the delineated powers.

Abnormal outgrowths:

Democracy recognizes the office not the incumbent. The reason why every ruler in Pakistan has felt the need to promulgate a new constitution lies in the fact that every person who attained to helmsmanship there, needed a constitution tailored to his needs—to sanction his sway, to fortify his office. The institutions there are left at the mercy of drifting swings of veering fortune. You have Presidents dismissing Prime Ministers and PMs seeking to impeach Presidents for every affront to ego; you have courts promulgating law, appointing and dismissing themselves, the army acting upon instinct not policy, and a Prime Minister saying "I don't know" and getting believed! Nobody knows either his length or his breadth. The demarcation lines are blurred through frequent mis-use and none is striving to define them anew. The recent prime-ministerial gyrations are one, with the long history of constitutions gravitating towards the wielder of highest power.

(Un-)Defined arenas:

The democratic premise splits defined spheres of activity for its various organs. The parliament as the legislative arm has power within its sphere, so has the judiciary as the interpreter of these promulgated laws. The executive has its power restricted to the implementation of the laws, so legislated and interpreted. President is either, designated as the nominal head, to free-wheel the inter se inter-action, investing the Prime Minister with the executive power, or is himself the chief executive who may appoint a factotum Prime

Minister. We have the former situation prevailing in UK and India, while the American and French politics employ the latter model. Per se there is nothing derogatory in either of the systems, the only difference being that of practical convenience. The essence lies in the non-interference by one arm in the designated functions of the other wings. When one branch riding on the bloated crests of popular support, or brute power, or even mis-conceived egos, attempts to ride over the others, the delicate poise of the system is shattered leaving only a mess behind. An overly powerful Parliament is as bad as an over-riding presidency or an overwhelming judiciary.

Absurd circuitry:

Pakistani Supreme Court took a first to its credit, when it restored Nawaz Sharif to Prime Minister ship, a couple of years ago. Today it is overwriting judicial history and precedent by appointing itself, dictating law and now, suspending its own judges. Probably the lack of a definitive constitution (or a Plethora of constitutions!), has enabled judiciary to formulate an opinion that the word of a justice is law. It is law, but only interpreted law. A similarly intransigent stance is evident in the parliamentary transaction. It began by clipping the presidential wings and seems loath to stop till it had brought every other wing under its axil. And over the parliament rides the Prime Minister with his brute majority, settled in his belief that all power must flow from the prime ministerial wish. Modulating all these cantankerous egoes is the extra democratic office of the army chief! So powerful in this chief that Army has become an accepted wing there adding a fourth dimension to the three wings of democratic polity!

Unrefined activism:

Take the genesis of the current fracas. Supreme Court, its chief to be exact, proffers a list of to be appointed justices and insists upon its acceptance. The PM toys with the idea of curtailing the number of judges already there and fulminates against the judiciary. The court slaps a contempt case against him, and the Prime Minister fulminates a little more to test the tepidity of waters. Real hot the waters prove, with the friendly heat of army added to judicial ethusiasm. The PM bows, but the gesture is not seen as sufficient enough to mollify the bruised egos of justices; they proceed apace. PM's parliament sets to business and asserts its authority by amending the contempt law itself. The court, not to be undone, moves equally swiftly and issues injunction against grant of presidential assent. The Prime Minister threatens to remove the president. Army moves in and a truce is declared between the warring persons because nowhere in this, had the offices or wings of democracy, i.e. the law been in question. It was a feud among the persons vying for supremacy.

Dangerous paths:

When authority is geared to press individuality, the polity's paths are left broken and bashed. The truce should have held, but didn't because in the brief skirmish all seemed to have lost. And, all had tasted blood. With law as the hand-maid of personal ends it is difficult to assess the legality and illegality of actions. Quetta bench had no business dismissing the Chief Justice, but it did; no justice has the jurisdiction to constitute a bench, save the Chief Justice, but one did, other justices came and played ball appointing themselves a new head: the Chief Justice, "old" not "new', restored to the president the power to dismiss PM, armed with which the president resigned! So the 'nth' round goes to.....whosoever, it is not the law, nor the institutions. It definitely does not go to democracy.

***

And, merrily does the butterfly hop!.....

You have heard the saying: running with the hare and hunting with the hound. Here comes the latest illustration from the Pak stable of contradiction, this time from Benazir herself as she, on the eve of the Pak General's forthcoming Indian visit, takes a few choice somersaults upon the Gods own contradiction called Pakistan. But then, the change of stands, stances even studies by the Pak rulers, both military and non military, are a rule rather then an exception. Why, it could even be called a grand legacy handed down from Jinnah himself who, after decades of politicking on *Muslims-are-a-nation-*apart gave that great 'liberal' *Pakistan-for-Hindus-Muslims-Sikhs-all* speech on the eve of inauguration of his religious fiefdom. And, at that very time he was planning the invasion in tribal garb to take way 'Muslim' Kashmir from 'Hindu' India! Nawaz Sherif the last of politicos there was just following the tradition….fulfilling the dictates of a faith… when he simultaneously signed the Lahore Declaration and the grants for the Pak army incursing into Kargil.

Had Musharraf kicked out the civilian a bit earlier he would have been singing of a '1000-year war' with India a la Yahaya or Bhutto of the Bangladesh memory, or still collecting corpses in the Kargil hills or, cooling his calloused heels in some foreign country after having been duly discredited for a pull-out which would inevitably have been forced. For once Benazir is right when she says that all "previous leaders who ventured to hold talks with India have suffered public disapproval" Lahore, as it was, was not a huge hit with the Pak public. So Musharaf, only a general then, spurned shaking hands with Vajpayee. Musharaf, is now coming to chalk out a path for peace with the same Vajpayee. On the strength of a renewed offensive in Kashmir by his 'boys', as the rising violence in valley indicates? But the pride of place for shifting stands as well as for tucking stark contradictions under one shalwar-string must go to Benazir Bhutto, the 'daughter of the east'.

'Daughter of the East, indeed! She couldn't speak the language of the God's Own Country... wouldn't, like her father, care to ... until becoming its premier forced her (again, like her redoubtable father, eh!) to learn it. You could say 'any oriental language' but probably they allowed some rudimentary Sindhi to be spoken in the Zulfi household. Or, possibly the Oxford where she studied did insist upon her taking up a foreign language and she chose one of the eastern tongues. Quite a possibility, though one is not sure. Yet how emphatically she called herself East's daughter in those pre-prime ministerial memoirs! Incomprehensible. But then, there is much across the border that one does not understand. One, for instance, never understood the need for the people there to send their sons and daughters abroad (Bhutto, writes Benazir in the Daughter of... would not have more children for he could not afford to send them all for the costly European education!) if the end an ultimo is a Taliban training. There could be a more sagacious reason, that it would ensure a smoother life after these scions get exiled form their beleaguered Pakistan, by choice or coercion. From where they can easily care for their beloved people? And, the nation?

Like Ms Benazir has been doing for the past so many years. It must be a hard job defending a Pakistan neither whose judiciary nor military... nor, probably, the people either... she can trust with her life and safety! So she stays there in the secure West, trotting salvations for her tipsy part of the east. Her latest, pronouncements on the Musharraf visit which she styles 'spider and the fly' tell so much about her, as butterfly-like she hops around the thorny bushes that is her beloved Pakistan. And how! Now pushing the hawks, now patting the doves; now prating how she set up the Pak Missile Board while pointing a straight finger at George Bush's missile programme; now praising the peace initiative and now piffling its premise, promise and consequences. And, all the time pontificating on peace! That subtle sophistry could be Eastern. Or, could it be? It is so smooth, so technological!

There could be much doubt as to what she actually says but for the simile of the 'spider and the fly'. Thus she reinforces the Pak stereotype of hostile India while placating the Indian peaceniks at the same time. Hostile how? Because India is large? Of course, she would not say 'because India is Hindu' though you can easily smell a malicious mullah in the breath. She does point to the economic mire that Pakistan is, but would not accept that it is the very idea, which gave Pakistan birth that has caused it to be mired. Yet the most spectacular is how she flits around the nuclear issue. It was the bomb that first bombed Pakistan and then gave it grand notions of subduing India – India is hostile, remember! And how was the Islamic bomb got? She did the rest, she says, after her father 'gave' the Pak scientists the 'blue prints'. So much for the peaceful intents. She takes umbrage at Armitage for voicing concern that 'retired' Pak scientists may help proliferation, decrying it as a calculated move to pressurize Musharraf, yet points out that her government had imposed travel restriction on these scientists for the very same reasons.

In that topsy-turvey strain it is only logical that she should term the Musharraf visit 'worth while' and 'inconsequential' in the same breath. And castigate democratic India for 'dealing with a dictator' in the process. Why she is doing all this flitting and hopping around, did you ask? To tell Pak people that she is a true patriot, to point to the establishment that she alone can walk this testy rope smoothly, to tell American that she shares their proliferation fears, to assure peaceniks that she is with them, to warn the army about its general, too. And, to score a few brownie points over India along the way and tell the hardliners that they have nothing to fear from her. Instead of an insight from a political scion, all you get is politicking at its crudest.

She is not giving out anything; she is not committing anything, yet keeps telling you that everything is wrong out there. The unstated vision, for the American consumption of course, is that she could get it righted for them. How? By riding a hundred boats? By espousing every cause from Islamic bomb to lasting peace? Say how many hops can you reasonably take? Few, but then you can hardly help a mad hopping if you are fronting for an anachronism with the modern day cares and concerns, using the 'correct' idioms and phrases!

***

Is a mere ‘A’ or ‘The’ the question?.....

How does might make the mares ramble! And, on how small a pretext! Between ‘a central issue’ and ‘the central issue’ the Secretary of State—it appears superfluous to prefix American, eh!—has left the highly tense Indian and Pakistani peoples happily guessing the true content of this newest double-speak on the vexing issue of Kashmir. India is happy that he has said it is ‘a central issue’ and not ‘the central issue’ over which the Pak media and government went gaga before Powell added the confounding, or clarifying, article. And, of course, the Pakistanis are insistent that he meant what he said there upon their soil. In the meantime it is interesting to note that the Powellian visit came in the old obfuscatory way of Americans, Pakistan first and India next, days hours and utterings carefully measured, to keep the ‘balance’ kicking jauntily. One remains a valuable ally and another a valuable friend; one is lauded for calling for a ‘role for America’ and another is respected in the path of ‘bilateralism’. Meanwhile both must keep the American interest uppermost. ‘Yes, how useful can careful double-speak be’, the Secretary may be musing in his Washington suite right at this moment.

Indeed, it is very useful for confounding all around. The semantists would tell you that there is a whole hell and heaven difference between ‘a’ and ‘the’. The logicians, however, would show that it is all much ado about nothing, this hair-splitting of articles of speech. They may even call it a contradiction in terms. For didn’t Euclid show two millenniums before that there was a single center to a circle? That square truth plainly tells that you cannot have many central issues in any circular relationship. There 'a' or 'the' is simply irrelevant. But in the political game shows it is this beating about the empty bush that makes for all the fun. Thus, while all the talk and telling for the last fifty years indicate that Kashmir is a talking point between India and Pakistan, while all the treaties from Tashkent to Lahore speak of it, Musharaf rode away from Agra in a huff because the Indian side would not agree to make a specific mention of the oft-mentioned thing.

There, all hinges upon whether Kashmir is 'a central issue' or 'the central issue' between India and Pakistan. And all, at the same time, are aware that even a clear choice between which articles to use, would not help in any way because still there would be the difference between India's contention of POK being the issue in Kashmir and Pakistan's insistence that it is the other Kashmir. Meanwhile, none seems to remember that there is more to the state of Jammu and Kashmir besides the 'Kashmir': that there is a lot more that is much more significant in the area as well as the number and choices there. If Kashmir is central – 'a' or 'the', whichever – is Jammu peripheral? Is the sprawling Ladakh a non-significant part and choice, a place and people that do not count? Then, there is the question whether the other Kashmiris are a non-issue because the Americans must pay Pakistan for helping it with Laden?

Of course, there is the mighty question about terrorism. Even at Agra India was ready to give Pakistan the central cake if she agreed to serving, rather not serving, India the dish of terrorism.

Musharaf has since learned that there is terrorism too around in Kashmir. Americans would not disagree there, cannot disagree there. Now if the issue is terrorism, there again Kashmir is the central issue, implying the central issue of terrorism there. That would mean that 'a', 'the' or 'central' are all besides the issue. Probably, Powell knows it well and threw out phrases that would not mean much in the real reckoning. And yet give American a much-needed handle to lever the sub-continental neighbors well, without meaning anything substantial.

What the American meant is only known to him though a reasonable guess would be that he said what they have been saying all the time; keep jostling your heads over the issue and paving the way for our intervention. And the people here readily comply: reading their own intents into it, and misreading the American purpose for their ends. Now if that implies that all these 'central' or non-central disputes are of American making that is not the intention at all. Not here in this column. For it well nigh knows that our disputes are of our own making. They are our own inventions and like all inventions can be used in any possible way. And we are compounding our miseries by our own perfidy. Witness the mirth on certain faces, which become all glow on the mere suggestion that America has 'agreed to intervene'.

There is even a body of thought that gets happy—sinfully happy, to tell the truth—at the prospect that there is a possibility of America taking Kashmir as a colony unto itself? Like those proverbial cats that had gotten happy on seeing the monkey and handed over their cake for a full arbitration. Of course, the cats did not know; they were naïve alright but not raving mad. Our cats are actually happy that America would eat this cake up fully and chew out bits for them to scramble after. Now, didn't somebody say who said that democracy came all too soon to this subcontinent. We people through our actions and intents, keep showing that we have not learnt the value of freedom, or the privilege of choice, or the appreciation of our identity. Why else would we be gleeful that others' rights over us have been accepted', that others would be coming to lord it over us, that our identify and existence would be decimated for good?

***

And, the score for Pakistan is, 'Love all'!.....

Now, what is the big deal? Pakistan is back where it always was – in the trusted hands of a despondent uncertainty. If that sounds like a contradiction in terms, it characterizes Pakistan all the better. Pakistan was birthed on a narrow sectarian agendum of religion being the nation. The truth that religion is only a religion, not a nation, was discovered by its very founder within days of getting his wishes fulfilled. The first speech that Jinnah made in 'the land of pure', talked of a secular nation, where all people, of all creeds, would enjoy all rights. But the truth has to be accepted; Pakistan has remained a nation of inequalities for the last fifty-two years. How could a nation, founded on a religion be a secular tolerant country? Within months of writing its new anthem Urdu poet Jagan Nath Azad had to leave his land, his anthem and flee to India.

Over the years the crore of Hindus and Sikhs who had been left there, have been reduced to a few lacs of scared, hounded, second-class citizens. After Hindus, the 'purifiers' descended upon the Ahamedies. They were after Shias when the latest coup came. Because, every illogicism has its own logic, sweep and sway. The logic of illogic's, has seen Pakistan pass into one bottleneck after another because it was neither a nation, nor a freedom nor any rights or visions that the builders of Pakistan-mania were aiming at. They all wanted fiefs. The fundamentalists wanted land, to wreck their visions of a seventh-century Arabia upon. The feudatories wanted a land unchallenged by the threat of reformist current. The orthodoxy wanted a land, free of any entanglements with modernism. The aristocracy wanted a land to rule without the destabilizing threats of a popular mandate. That is what Pakistan was carved for. And, that is what Pakistan granted. The fundamentalists got their purity, the feudatories their fiefs, the orthodoxy their dark ages and the aristocracy their unthreatened titles. Somehow the army had not been counted when the designer fiefs were conceived. But interest, especially self interest, is nothing if not resilient. Army was quickly included in. And all have lived happily ever after. The ever after including the latest coup.

As the Govt. of India has rightly said, it is an 'internal affair' of Pakistan. For India it makes no difference whether is a Bhutto, a Zia, a Benazir, a Nawaz, or now, a Musharaf in the saddle. Whoever is there at the helm, always calls for a greater helmsman-ship for India. Jinnah created the Kashmir tangle with his 'tribal invasion'. Ayub foisted the '65-war. Bhutto talked of a thousand year war and pushed Yahayah into the one of '71. Zia killed Bhutto and put Kashmir terrorism in place. Banazir-Sharif, Sharif-Benazir, carried it through the nineties. Sharif wrote Kargil. And with that his own demise. It is Musharaf now. For India, the game of musical chairs there is an internal affair, which would not make any change in the Pakistan belligerency... err, policy towards India. Not does it make any difference to Pakistan.

Come to think of it. The feudatories have been enjoying their fiefs uninterruptedly. The orthodoxy has built its dark-age without hindrance. The fundamentalists have wrought their purity all over

Pakistan. and are now spilling it out. The feudatories have had their comfortable fiefs. That left the army and the aristocracy as the two contenders for power. They have been sharing it and ruling among themselves. The first ten years went to the aristocracy to mess with ruling Pakistan. Then the army tried its hand at it for thirteen. Then the arestocray for a shorter six year's rule followed by army's ten. In 1999, the aristocracy completed twelve years of its mismanagement, and it certainly was army's turn. It would probably have been an aberration, if Musharaf had not stirred up. But he, thankfully, has and the score is level at 'love all' again. That is Pakistan. In truth. In reality. In the logical culmination of the illogicity which gave it birth.

***

Is peace with Pakistan possible?.....

Now it is clear that when Dev Anand was going ga-ga over the Lahore ride, and the whole of India was gushing over the friendship and fraternity, when Vajpayee was promising '*jung na hooney dengey*', Pakistan was actually planning a bigger intrusion. Even as Vajpayee was setting out for the Lahore-fest, this column had cautioned not to be carried away by unilateral effusions of *biradari* and *bhaichara*. *Biradari* and *bhaichara* work on reciprocity. Before Vajpayee had boarded the bus, twenty-two of Indian Bhais had been slain by Pak terrorists. When he crossed into Pakistan, the Pak generals refused to salute "the enemy". Lahore was closed; the itinery of the goodwill visit was curtailed all over Pakistan, police was canning the protestors. And, keeping them away from the venues where India and Pakistan were supposedly ushering in the peace. This protected peace could not last. It didn't. Even without Kargil that peace was a deception; with Kargil it has proved a delusion.

Is peace with Pakistan an impossibility? 'Impossibility' carries finality and finality is something about which none can be certain, especially when talking of humans. It is quite probable that tomorrow... yes tomorrow, there may occur a change in the affairs of the sub-continent, and India and Pakistan may come together, not only in peace but even form an undefeatable confederation. May be to rule the whole Asia! Eh! That is hope, yes hope, the human capacity to live beyond reason and logic. For humans hope is as essential as the air. Hope took Vajpayee to Lahore. Hope blinded an array of formidable intellectuals on this side of border, to a thousand clear signals that the Lahore Bus won't ride far. Hope rings still, rooted in the innate goodness of man, based in the essential gentility of human nature, buttressed by the similar racial, social and economic basis of the Indian and Pakistani people, and proffers a renewed plea for peace betwixt the two nations.

Hope... a different hope... a sinister hope took Pak army on a foolish adventure over the Kargil hills. A foolish adventure? 50 Indians and over 500 Pakistani soldiers are already dead and thousands of people have been rendered homeless. It is not known whether the Lahore-bus was included in this adventurism to deflect Indian attention while Pakistan went about fulfilling her hopes, or if the Bus just 'happened' when the preparations for the intrusion were going on. One makes it a callous calculation; the other adds insincerity to it. But, whose callousness? Whose sincerity? Pakistan somehow has succeeded in writing Kashmir into a veritable pre-requisite to her existence; she lives Kashmir, breathes Kashmir and with waning symbols of nationalism is almost held together by it. So nothing... neither probity, nor morality... matters. Some may like to believe that ethical questions (morality, legality etc.) have nothing to do with statecraft. They would be thinking the way Pakistan has been thinking all these five decades. And failing. Failing her people... her promise... her very existence. Yes, ethical questions matter, for the whole human effort is aimed at producing a better world.

Would annexation of Kashmir make a better Pakistan? Would Pakistan cease to be 'a moth-eaten' country, as Jinnah called it, after she gets the 16,000 square km of Kashmir? Would she be economically stronger, militaril mightier, ethnically more homogenous? Is Pakistan seeking a pathway into Central and possibly Eastern

Asia over the Himalayan peaks? Is Pakistan really nourishing these quixotic ambitions, proposing to fight China with Chinese weapons just as the original Don Quixote would have done? Or, is it simply that Pakistan, founded as she was as a nation for Indian Muslims considers a concentrated pocket of Muslims as its natural 'part'? For a theocratic confusion masquerading as a nation that could become a reasonable obsession. And, once having got into the rut is unwilling to shake the delusion? It is easy to miss this plain truth, in a superabundance of scholarship that our age makes possible, but Pakistan helpfully, keeps harping on it, now as the 'core issue', now as the "only" issue, always as the psychological prop for its being and nationalism.

Though, with a nation ever on the look out for sustaining symbols, you can never tell yet for the present, Kashmir, is the 'only' dispute. Mind, it is not a solution to Kashmir that Pakistan is seeking, but annexation. And it is not the lady novelist alone, who wanted to give herself in wedlock to Vajpayee in lieu of Kashmir, asking for Kashmir. This was the substance of Najam Sethi's lecture in New Delhi, over which he was (wrongly) imprisoned backhome. No reason, no treaty would bind Pakistan here. The accession, the law, the convention, nothing matters. Clear provisions of the independence Act did not matter when Pakistan tried the Tribal trick in 1947. Sovereignty, Shimla... nothing mattered when Kashmir-insurgency was instigated. International law did not matter when the Kargil intrusion was planned. Pak people, economy, position... nothing matters when Kashmir is the goal. Would financial handshakes and farcical resolutions matter, here?

That is the question. Peace with Pakistan is not possible so long as she remains obsessed with Kashmir. Remember Pakistan is not seeking a solution but annexation of Kashmir. For the last ten years Pakistan has been waging a proxy war. Peace talks began in 1988 with Rajiv visit, even as the first batches of terrorists were being pushed in to India. For the past three years Pakistan has been pummeling Kargil; peace has been talked during this time from Male to Washington. Peace was talked at Lahore, while Pak army was being transported to Kargil border. Peace would be talked again today. And shattered all over the J&K border! Is peace possible here? With these obsession and delusions?

***

The Pak route to *Jihad.....*

For Ali Mohd Jinnah it was a fifteen-year long struggle to get his religion based, communal Pakistan. It took him those fifteen years to traverse the path from a secular Indian politician to a near fanatical Pakistani. When Jinnah, who had taken up residence in London after his break with the Congress, had first been approached to take up the lead of Muslim League and the idea of a separate Muslim-land, he scoffed at the very notion. Though that notion had been mooted by Iqbal in 1930 in his presidential address at the Allahabad convention of Muslim League and had seen some publicity in Cambridge student Rehmat Ali, it was still in its infancy. There is a raging debate that who had first floated the idea. The official history of Pakistan traces the idea to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and calls the 1857 'the first struggle' for creation of Pakistan. Thereby it links it to Bhadur Shah Zafar and to the Moguls and then through Ghouri and Gaznavi to Mohd bin Qasim, the invader of Sindh a full fourteen hundred years ago. That may be a tortuous tract but it can hardly be denied that Pakistan came through that route.

And it still is following that historical chute for a final realization. There the fanatics and fundamentalists, who rule the roost in Pakistan today, find a historical continuity and relevance. It is there that the easy public support for the jihadis comes. It is not an aberration that only last February the Lahore High Court ruled that nobody could be prevented from collecting funds in Pakistan for jihad. Nor is it a failure that for the last half a century Pakistan has not been able to define its polity. That polity had been defined in the creation of Pakistan itself and any redefinition would only be a setback to that primary goal. Soon after its formation Jinnah himself attempted a redefinition of the polity of Pakistan. But that August 1947 declaration of Pakistan as 'a secular republic where all peoples, races and creeds would enjoy equal respect and rights' was quickly drowned in the war with India under the garb of 'tribal invasion'. It, on one hand gave the lie to the sincerity of that redefinition and on the other saved Jinnah from being taken seriously at those words. Analysts believe that it also helped Jinnah keep the mantle of the 'great leader'.

Else, they say, he may have had to face the burnt of his own doings for he had really worked those emotions to such a pitch that it would have eaten its own propagator if he were found having gone back on his policy and promise. Then Jinnah died, leaving his 'moth-eaten' Pakistan stranded for a definition of its polity. And, to settle its legacy for future vis-à-vis its plank of religion. It couldn't. From his immediate successors to Ayub and Yahya Khan there had not been any resolution of the status of Islam in the nation of Pakistan. Here we are speaking of an official declaration, not the idea with the people. For the laity it was always clear. For the 'crusaders' too it is well defined, but somehow the official books had refrained form writing it in. Probably, because it is hard to declare such an intent as lead to the formation of Pakistan and be a legitimate aspirant of democratic norm. That was one of the reasons Pakistan never came to formulating a Constitution for itself for a quarter century till the 1973 Constitution was promulgated by Bhutto when he tried to reconcile the words and deeds of Jinnah. Zia made the necessary corrections there to give Pak military a practical constitution. And here the formative aim of Pakistan was recognized as the official objective.

That could not but make jihad a free-for all game. And it did. It let loose hordes of jihadis. Of course, Pakistan has gotten itself embroiled in the state of Jammu and Kashmir since its inception with the objective of getting the Muslim majority state into its fold as a logical demand of its formative theory. It compromised broadly and baselessly with each and every power that came up from British to Americans for the sole objective of getting support on Kashmir. It had known how the good offices of a British minister had not only saved it at UNO but had actually given it a 'case on Kashmir'. It joined right and left, from SEATO, CENTO to a lasting partnership with China over Kashmir. At the same time it kept he military option open and never gave up the armed means of attaining this cherished bit of land for the Faith. From the 'Tribal Raid' to *al-fateh*, to actual war in mid sixties, it has never shied from using clear force. But somehow jihad was not a cry before Zia gave the nation a clear Islamic definition. Not a common cry, at least. It grew with Zia and became a monster that finally engulfed Afghanistan. It tried to overreach its strength and fell upon its face. But would it be eliminated for good?

That is the question the world is today faced with. Its answer would be given in Pakistan not by the perceptions of the American statesmen who may have got Musharraf round to serving their immediate objectives. It is ultimately for the people of Pakistan to determine the course their 'aspirations' have taken. Musharraf did not take Pakistan on the jihadi route, though he has worked as a useful cog to speed up and spread it. It is the idea of Pakistan that leads to jihad logically, inevitably. Unless the people there denounce the path that has misled them for half a century, no amount of clarity would come. Nor would the misleading perspective presented by many intellectuals in India make Pakistan a jihad-free society. It is the people who must correct and clear their notions. They do not see the fall of Afghanistan as the logical fall of a fallacy but simply as a strategy gone wrong. And there are many cohorts of theirs around who seem to share that view of the recent events in Pakistan and Afghanistan. That view cannot salvage Pakistan how so anti-terrorist Musharraf, or a future makeshift arrangement that may come to rule the roost there, turns. Jihadi terrorism is a logical culmination of the idea of Pakistan and to root it out, that polity has to be redefined and restated.

***

So they refused their 'warriors dead!.....

One of the counsels William Hazlitt, the well-known British essayist, gave his son was never to do anything that he would not be able to proudly proclaim. Of course, the Pakistan authorities would not be delivering that sagacious counsel to the terrorists it has been sending out to fan into the neighboring countries. It, on the contrary, has been even advising its regular soldiery to indulge in infamous and delinquent acts to further its ulterior motives. Of course, that is a necessary evil, which those agendas and persuasions entail; if you are dealing out foul cards you can hardly show the underside of your hands or sleeves. At one time there were 'theologists' who went around saying that in times of high need *hekmat* i.e., strategy, dictated that strict adherence to the tenets of even religion—cut and dried as its pronouncements are—is neither met nor to be insisted upon. Thus even suicide that unmitigated anathema to Islam came to be taken up as a strategy.

Honour of actions and fair dealing were certainly not the guiding principle of the marauders, who were sent out from there. And, true to their license they looted, repined, and ravaged the land they happened to fall upon. The land was the bubbling Kashmir and they laid it bare within a period of ten years. Today, the mounts surrounding the vale are bare of all vegetation, its lush pastures are desolate, and its happy people are hounded men and women who talk in whispers, look behind their shoulders for possible eavesdroppers and are generally scared shit. The place where you could trust anybody and everybody just a decade back, is today reefing with suspicion where none can trust anybody. And, they say, nobody knows who would be killed when, where and why. The fact that the people there would shut down whole markets on dictates of terrorists or their cohorts over a single so-called 'custodial death', while not daring to ask why dozens of innocents are being gunned down daily tells how sorry a state they have come to live in.

Probably, the sorriest part is that the people there have come to look upon this abnormal behavior as the normal, natural thing, they should always have been doing. That was how, when the students of University of Kashmir came out on streets in support of the greatest terrorist of all times, nobody said: hey, this support for evil-incarnate is not of Kashmiri seed and plant. They did hold a hartal the other day for the dubious young man who died in Delhi but no voice rose to condemn the professor of Arabic in Delhi University who, with his complicity in the attack on parliament, brought nation-wide shame and disrepute to the fair name of every kashmiri. One does not know if those abnormal psyches would see some strategy-*hekmat*-in the newest Pak volt face on terrorists and terrorism that is in offing.

That *hekmat* once saw the high crème of 'Kashmir leadership' going ga-ga over the *mehmans* who had come to 'lend them a hand'. Today those *mehmans* are being curtly asked to run off. Of course, they do not deserve either courtesy or a thanks giving. The shambles they have turned Kashmir into should have earned them a chase with brooms and chappals long back. But that does make it clear that the 'welcomes' they once got were neither wholesome nor good. Of course, none would acknowledge those 'invitations', 'welcomes' or 'feastings' the *mehmans* once enjoyed. Just as Pakistan is refusing to even acknowledge its dead of the attack on the parliament. The most apparent reason is that it would not like to be associated with the evil deeds of their dead. But then, they never gave any Hazlittian counsel of honour to the young men they have been sending out. And, they did similarly refuse to acknowledge their soldiers not only at Kargil but also at the Chammb sector last year. Not very honourable that, but then the tradition of honour is for those who follow honorable ways.

Those whose dealings are shoddy cannot make any gestures of honour. They are condemned to eat their words and go back on their promises. They may rationalize these as *hekmat* and strategy but the world knows that these are dark deeds. That is why the sagely of this world invented the sagas of honour and gallantry. That is why we have Hazlitts giving counsel of wisdom and honour. That is why the nations must have honorable objectives. That is why the dealings of men, peoples and nations must be above board. That deed alone is worth attempting which you can proudly proclaim to the wide world. Honour is what honour does. It never is a subtlety perpetrated on the sly. Everything that makes you disown your protégé, everything that shames a people in their acceptance, everything that makes a nation refuse its 'warriors' is a dishonorable act and nothing justifies it. Nor does refusal hide the high stink of shameful deeds.

There are many in Kashmir who do admit, though in what could only be called 'unofficial statements', that Pakistan has betrayed them. But they need to look deeper and ask whether they themselves have not betrayed their self, being and promise. For, lining up with the shoddy is being yourself shoddy itself and going with the dishonorable is dishonor manifest. Taking causes evil in design and aim cannot be an ennobling thing. And no nobility cometh from pursuit of goals that honour would not admit. Those goals lead to denials; they evoke refusals and have to be justified by roundabout turns and twists. Let no nation be so situated. Let no people invite that disgrace upon itself. Let no man have *mehmans* who would be his shame.

***

Pakistan is unifocal.... nay, obsessed!.....

History always repeats itself but never in the same order, nor always allotting the character the same roles. Take... yeah, Kashmir. India was the original campaigner petitioning the world to arbitrate on the dispute. That was Nehru rushing to the UN Security council in the wee days of freedom. There Pakistan (at the behest of UK and US) quibbled and after beating about every New York bush got the Security Council in its January 1948 meetings to force a reluctant India to accept that the issue was a broader Indo-Pak dispute. Pakistan thus got the Indian plea for action on the dispute over Kashmir, arising from a thinly veiled Pak aggression, to be construed as a dispute between India and Pakistan over monies, transfers, properties, army etc. etc., amongst which Kashmir became a peripheral concern.

Today India is insistent upon treating Kashmir a peripheral issue in the broad gamut of Indo-Pak differences and Pakistan is crying foul at the top of its voice. It wants to speak of nothing but Kashmir, wants to decide nothing before Kashmir and would hear nothing till Kashmir is dealt with. Confidence Building Measures, as the General said the other day, are meaningless. And trade, development, poverty...all, stuff and nonsense. Kashmir is central to their concern and calculations. And, why not? The general came to power over Kashmir and would be sustained in perpetual power by this magic mantra. For, that whole nation is happily pawned to this single obsession; it eats, breathes and lives Kashmir and loves the general whose world vision begins and ends with Kashmir.

At Agra the general virtually beseeched Indians to give him something on Kashmir so that he could show it to his fellow countrymen (so that they would then confirm him in his seat). He would personally go visiting the jails and look for the Indian POWs there. The trade exchange, culture...everything would be done but first he must have something to 'show' on Kashmir! It is said that as the General President was getting euphoric over his ever extending one-on-ones with the Indian PM his foreign minister passed him a note that back home it was being felt that he is relegating Kashmir... and pronto, he changed tract, tone and mood. All that goes to show how crucial Kashmir is in the perspective of Pakistani people; how critically they have been hooked to Kashmir.

It is difficult to say that it is all a recent development. Those Pakistanis in the tribal grab who invaded Kashmir in 1947 were regular army-men filled in largely by voluntary choice. As the memoires of some of the actors in the raid show, those people were only too eager to join in and that they had actually to send away other enthusiasts of jihad from the same soil infesting Kashmir. It was a 'duty' then; it is a 'duty' still, for it is a duty ordained by the command that justified Jinnah seeking a separate nation. It is something that goes naturally with the founding theory of Pakistan. And Kashmir is the first, nearest station... *paddav* in that quest. It has taken Indians half a century to realize that they shall have to insist upon an Indian essence if they mean to safeguard their cherished values of freedom, democracy and ...yes, secularism. And, not even a majority of Indians acquiesce there yet.

In fact, it came a pleasant surprise (to Indians themselves) when the whole country was galvanized in the wake of the Chinese aggression in1962. Not so with the enthusiasts of the Pak state and idea. As soon as the idea was floated it gained acquiscence. Among the elite not the ignoramii and the riffraff, alone! As soon as the Pak state came into being, it organized the jihad to raid the nearest citadel to 'free' the faithfuls there. And, it was not the now looming military that was behind it. So the presumption that Pakistan would have taken a different route had the military-men spared it time and space is only a crafted wish—the jehadi obsession, which is the bane and banquet of today's Pakistan, is neither born of a miscarried democracy nor is an illegitimate issue there. It stems from the premise of Pakistan itself. Though Kashmir it certainly is not the last issue that would occupy centrality in the Pakistani scheme it, as on today, is the central issue there.

And, it is well nigh doubtful whether anybody out there would ever feel or act differently. The viscitudes that have been the Pak destiny, have certainly fostered it to a quicker, concentrated fruitition. The military-men who have ruled the legacy of Jinnah, directly or indirectly, over the last fifty years have advanced the country rapidly along that primitive streak. There, probably, would have been a chance—admittedly a remote, uncertain chance—of Pakistan and its people coming to terms with the reality of the 20th century world had its generals stayed in their barracks. They didn't and the surmise remains a conjecture—unfounded, unreal. It is a construction imposed by the Indian intellectuals and theorists not propounded, not even accepted by anybody on the Pak side. Like president Narayanan telling Musharraf that the central issue in the subcontinent is poverty, only to be ridiculed by the Pak counterpart over a whole week.

Though the politicians have generally found themselves trapped in the kashmir-unifocality, there are compelling indications that none would have desisted from this faithly path ordained by the founding of Pakistan itself. For a start it was Jinnah the most exalted, most popular of leaders Pakistan has ever had, who pushed the first raid and inspired a whole train of them. Next to him in popularity and appeal was Bhutto who signed the Simla accord. It was a chastised Bhutto from a truncated Pakistan who came to Simla, not to bring amity, but to get back his men and territory. We have no less an authority than Benazir telling that it was territory more than men that Bhutto came for. But peace was not on his mind nor was ending the friction in the subcontinent included in his mission. They were forced upon him by India as a price for the return of men and lands. Benazir and Nawaz have been only pale shadows securely in the clutches of the military establishment. The former all through her first term did not actually know of the terrorist training and the latter would have us believe that he was ignorant of Kargil. Would they have turned the Pak focus away? Could they have?

Yet the army-men have found in Kashmir an easy issue to reign in the 'pious' folks, to arraign public support there. If Musharraf was held tight by a little note, his predecessors have tightened their holds upon the usurped thrones with the leashes of Islam and Kashmir, the two, not infrequently, becoming synonymous. Probably, their leaders in the fifties still retained a little of their pre-partition perspectives; probably, they were a wee bit more circumspect; more possibly the logics they had unleashed had not yet reached their culminations. In any case they did not have to prove themselves, their concerns, nor their loyalties. Today the quests are concretized, the issues cut and dried. Notice Musharraf repeating ad nuseum: "I talked Kashmir"? That is because the leaders and the led in Pakistan today are not only convinced of Kashmir being the 'core issue' but live it, having bartered every other of their concerns for it. Call it unifocality. Call it obsession. It is the reality there. 'Call' and 'mission', as they call it.

***

No! Pak army alone is not in it!!.....

Kargil is fast becoming a metaphor for a lot in the Indo-Pak affairs. For one it establishes that an enemy is an enemy. From the 'Tribals' of' 47 to the "Mujahideen" of' 89 it is same film, same reel unrolling itself. From Jinnah to Zulfiqar to Nawaz, from Ayub to Yahyo to Zia, it is the same talk, same refrain, the same frame, and same reference, repeating and re-asserting itself. Unless there is a substantial, persistent, and deep shift in the Pakistani attitude, it'll be naïve to believe that she has quit war-mongering. The sweet smiles at Lahore were a sham. The low bow with which Sharif moved in Washington is no guarantee that he has learnt any lessons from Kargil. Kargil, for another, re-proves the old adage that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. And, vigilance is as sound as its shadest nook. Kargil also proves that it is not a section of Pakistan, the Mullahs or the hawkish army alone, that is fuelling the conflict; it the whole of Pakistan.

Yes, that truth must be accepted. It is the whole Pakistan, the military establishment, the politicians, sundry organization, laymen, the media, social scientists and the scientific community... yes, every body there charges the hate-India campaign. And, Kashmir is the symbol. Najam Sethi, when he delivered that fateful lecture in Delhi, was only giving the same objective a different argument, a different colour. He wanted India to give up Kashmir to save a 'devastated' Pakistan. Devasted how? Over Kashmir, of course. How often one is reminded of Atiya Shamshad, that Pakistani novelist who wanted to offer herself to /Vajpayee in marriage if only he 'settled Kashmir on Pakistan's terms'. From there, it is but short distance, both mental and physical, to a Mujahideen' training camp, to Drass and Batalik hills. Pakistanis are—have been—walking this distance gaily, happily, jauntily.

Why Kashmir? You may ask. Indeed, Indians have been asking it all these fifty years. The answer too, has been given, at least fifty thousand times: it is Islam, Stupid! Their Islam, at least. But the Indian intellect has stubbornly refused to accept this simple answer. And having rejected the plain truth, Indians have been inventing spurious theories and explanations. Of course, they thereby deceive only themselves. For Pakistan there are no deceptions. No imaginary 'conflicts' between the army and the civilian Government, for them. They know that this is a 'legitimate' policy for their nation and not an attempt by any "exploitative ruling class" to keep them 'subjugated'. Nor an attempt by the dominant Punjabis to subdue other provinces. It certainly is not against the wishes of an average Pakistani whether a Mohajir or a Sindhi, a Pathan or a Punjabi, a soldier or a civilian. It is the goal of every citizen there to annex, or 'liberate Kashmir' to themselves if you like. A few may be wise enough to gauge the impossibility of the task, but that does not make them 'opponents' of the 'cause'. If anything, they are more dangerous, more insidiously poisoned. Kashmir, a symbol of many 'jehads' remains a national objective there—a lingering objective that has not seen fulfillment. Hence, a more wanted objective.

Here on this side of the borders the people, imbued in a Dharma of tolerance, tend to look at things differently. They see the realities across the border too, differently. They see a Sindh divided against itself, they see Mohajirs struggling against a dire fate, they see the PoK people living through inhuman travails, they see Balouchis crying against Punjabi domination, they see the Pak politicians fighting ruthlessly for power and pelf, they see people steeped in poverty, women wrenched of all rights, a society getting hopelessly violent. They see it all and conclude that it is a fraction-ridden country, there, in which the different forces are vying for an upper hand. They are generally correct. But only so far. The next 'logical' conclusion that India and Kashmir are being used as tools in this power game, used to dupe common people, is wildly incorrect. India and Kashmir as a concrete symbol of it, is an issue, an object, a goal for all fractions, all regions, all leaders, all people of Pakistan. The rest are their internal problems but this one is a national end.

Yes, it is not helpful to confuse the state of Pakistani nation and its goal of Kashmir. One is a problem within the nation, within the faith for they do not separate the two. The other, is an unsolved problems of the nation. On Kashmir and India they are all one, out there. That it does not make them one is a different matter. Islam did not make Ibrahim Lodi and Babar one, but the two were not divided on Islam. Islam does not make the Afghans and the Pakistanis one, but it will not do to confuse the issue. Pakistan looks on Kashmir as an Islamic goal and there, the whole Pakistan concurs. Apparently the Muslim world too concurs, or how else would the Organization of Islamic Countries, all good friends of India, close its eyes to the blatant aggression by Pakistan. Even Iran, which was all set to go to war with Pakistan just months ago, has not found anything wrong in the Kargil intrusion.

How Pakistan came to be a guardian of Islam's honour is for the faith of Islam to sort out. And quite a vital task it is, for out there in Pakistan they are convinced that it is naturally so. Neither the politician, nor the soldier, not at all does the 'poor Pakistani' have any doubts in this regard. They are all joined in this one cause. Equally. Heartily. Together with the Afghanis, Sudanese and all other 'mercenaries'. Oh no, they are not 'mercenaries'. They are not fighting for money. Nor out of boredom or habit. They are in it for it is a 'cause' to them. A 'cause' that is regarded as an Islamic cause, a holy cause by all.

The sooner this truth is realized the better. For the truth alone can make us free. India and Indians need to free themselves from their self-deceiving conceptions about Pakistan and her belligerency.

***

Yeah!... Who controls Pakistan?.....

Democracy is peoples' power. People's power must command respect and sway. Yet, the supremacy that the Pakistani people's mandate of 1997 is gathering unto itself is tending to be an abnormality of sorts. Sharief is no Jinnah, nor does he have the 'tayeed'—acceptance—that Zulfiqaur Bhutto commanded in the post-Yahyah period. His two thirds majority of 97 was a coalition effort, won mainly on a negative vote of rejection against Benazir. Within a year and half of rule he has Pakistan mired in a crippling economic crisis, is facing rebounding allegations of huge personal corruption and is presiding over a veritable collapse of law and order. Yet Nawaz sharief finds occasion and authority to catapult every discomfiting Centre of power in Pakistan, into oblivion. Capping this increment of power is his dwindling clout in the actual house of representative—National Assembly. As the Shariat Bill showed the "thumping support" of 1997 are not only splintered into opposing groups, but even the members of his own party are growing critical of his actions and working. Yet, the Pak PM is getting "stronger and stronger" as he assumes precedence over one constitutional authority after another.

Nawaz Sharief's restoration by court, after getting sacked in 1993 is probably the only instance of its type in the democratic world. In the elections that followed his restoration by 'law', he lost. This time around, the first victim of his wrath (yes, it is wrath alone!)

was the Chief Justice of the very Supreme Court. Justice Sajjad may have been a trifle harsh on the PM, but he was not on the wrong side of the law. Ah......yes, is there a law there, except the law of personalities? Law does not authorize a couple of judges of a subsidiary bench to sack their Chief Justice. Yet, that is exactly what the Quetta bench did to its Lahore C.J. while the contempt proceedings against the PM were on. That infractious order held and the CJ had to go. Just a few months before his due retirement! Nawaz Sharief's was beginning to turn out a fatal kiss.

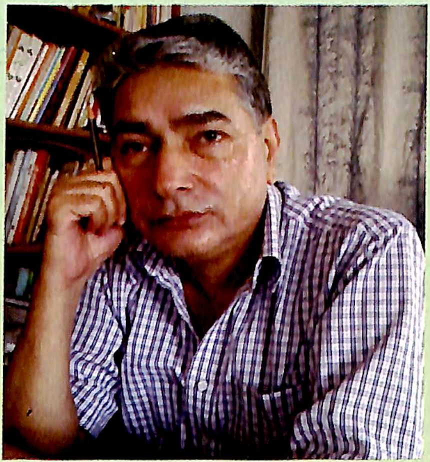
Concurrent with the lord Justice the lordly President bowed out. He too had shown an inclination against the rising scion and symbol of democracy. Abnormal as these departures were, it was widely presumed that the army had "effected" these decisions by siding with the elected authority. Democracy was seen to be getting respected in Pakistan in all these moves. But now, the ouster of the army chief, within 24 hours of having commented upon the working of the PM, shows that, probably, it was not the army that was calling the shots....err, "backing" the elected authority. Along with the army chief went the two senior-most generals while a junior third took over. "Power of army" is exerted by a coterie of commanders not some amorphous perception of the rank and file. After the army, this week showed that it was not ISI either that was dictating the terms.

If you are not taken in by the facile explanation that the "elected authority is gaining power", in Pakistan... enough power to begin ejecting Presidents, CJs, army commanders, at will and convenience... the question arises as to, who actually is wielding power in Pakistan? Curiously, except Justice Sajjad, none of the dignitaries were removed. They all sent in their peppers. Seemingly they resigned suomoto, in sincere regret, over brushing the worthy

PM the wrong way, while the CJ was removed after an apparent concurrence of the whole Supreme Court, yet, none of them is either remorseful or reconciled. Justice Sajjad is still contesting his ouster. Leghari, within days of resigning showed his bitterness and vowed to get the better of Nawaz Sharief. General. Karamat was critical and may soon be airing his rancor. The other generals resigned in protest... and so it is no love lost there. So what queered the pitch? The threat of impeachment against Leghari may have taken months to concretize, even if Nawaz Sharief could've mustered enough support, which he didn't have. As for the general, there had not even been an official reaction. Whosoever had been pressed to comment had been cautious and circumspect. And yet the, the "most powerful man" of Pakistan resigned! Nothing constitutional about it! Nor natural!!

Islam recognizes the existence of "Jinnaat" (ghost, spirits, etc.) with Hazrat Suliaman (Solomon of Jews) at their head. Unless Nawaz Sharief has got a goodly hold upon this supernatural tribe and is using them to bring into effect his suprademocratic, supranational wishes, there is no explanation for these events. Except that, there is a still higher authority (eh no….not God!) that is making these decisions and is fully on Sharief's side. It could be a drug-cartel or an authority that has risen to a supra-constitutional position. Or, say a very extraordinarily powerful body (of terrorists for instance or a Punjabi clique) before which even the President and army chiefs must flinch. Not very long ago, Benazir has been PM. Twice. By her own admission she had not been told of the terrorists activates, training camps etc. nor about the status of the nuclear development. The events of this year show that there is more to Pakistan than meets the roving eye. Yes…..it could be an abnormal country. If, it is something else that controls the destiny and decisions of Pakistan, the international world must sit up and take note. More so India. With nuclear arsenal a long-range missiles lying around, it is imperative that the centers that actually wield power in Pakistan are scouted out. The authority that could spew unprecedented, unthinkable, venom could also wreck havoc in the sub-continent. And even in the world. Unprecedented havoc! Unthinkable havoc!!

***



Freelance writer and columnist, Dr. R L Bhat, besides holding academic degrees in Law and Journalism, is a trained Biotechnologist with noted research work in analysis and cloning of bacterial genes at premier institutes of the country. His scientific writings have won him acclaim. In literature he is acquainted with Persian, Urdu, Kashmiri and English.

Dr. Bhat has made his mark in the field of Journalism with incisive analytical articles on contemporary politics and history of state and the nation. His articles numbering over a thousand have been published in leading dailies of the state and journals outside the state. His special areas of interest are **Islam** and **history of Kashmir**. His writings bear an unquestionable stamp of a master thinker.

His published works include a companion collection of essays ***Randomly Around India***. Some of his forthcoming publications include ***Taariikhi Sayid Alii***, English translation of earliest Persian history of Kashmir, and a translation of major poems of eminent Kashmiri Poet ***Abdul Ahad Azad***.

Dr Bhat heads a much noticed literary organisation, ***Kashmiri Bhasha evam Sanskriti Pratishthan (Sampriti), Jammu***.

He lives at ***425/4 Laxmivihar (Tomal), Bohri, Jammu, 180002***